

SlaveCraft

Roadmaps for Erotic
Servitude

principles, skills and tools

by a grateful slave

with Guy Baldwin, M.S.

introduction and afterword by
Patrick Califia, M.A.

additional material by Joseph W. Bean

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Dedication

The Diversity....the amazing Variety that we see everywhere in nature must surely be the clearest possible guide that the Universe presents to us as being the obvious and correct model for how things "should" be. It follows that there must be many correct ways to be a galaxy, star, planet, rock, tree, fish, fowl, man, woman, to be heterosexual, spiritual, and loving, as well as a great many correct ways to manifest our sexuality and erotic lives. If the Diverse Universe is any guide to what is proper and correct, then there is clearly room for U/us here, too.

So, this little book is offered as a tribute to those Masters and slaves who are brave enough to grapple with fear and shame to produce more honest lives for themselves.

a grateful slave
1997

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	9
A Note from Guy Baldwin	11
A Note from a grateful slave	15
Publisher's Note	17
Introduction by Patrick Califia	19
About the Essays	25
Haiku: "Boots"	27
Essay 1-The Call to Slavery	29
Essay 2-The Myth of Slave Training	39
Essay 3-Seeing Slavery	49
Essay 4-The Principle of Identity	65
Essay 5-The Principle of Obedience	79
Essay 6-The Principle of Transparency	95
Essay 7-The Principle of Humility	101
Essay 8-Permutations	111
Essay 9-Dealing with Fear	117
Essay 10-Using or Processing Pain	129
A Birthday Wish	141
Afterword: MASTERCRAFT - A Dialogue With Guy Baldwin's <u>SlaveCraft</u>	143
About the authors	179

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But first and foremost, thanks must go most earnestly to the Master of “a grateful slave,” without whose direction and encouragement, the chief author of this book would most likely have remained silent. It is the slave’s commitment to the need for humility, and the wish to be heard objectively that will not allow him to supply his name here. I am deeply grateful to him for the rare opportunity to render his passion, thoughts, and feelings into words here for readers.

Race Bannon has been unfailing in his conviction that I could really do this thing. The others most deserving of mention here are: Bill Litts; Fred Katz; James Kane; Mister Luchessa; Mister Kevin and Tom; gregory, Pete Fitz; art; denny; Mister LeBlanc; Richard M. Wolfe and Marie Wade Wolf; Vince; boy allen; Lthr Edge; larry; Thom Magister; Skip Milhouser, M.D.; Master Ron K. and Cheri; Troy “Kurt” Considine; Hal Lester; Control; Mister T. Burke; steve carlisle; Tom Swift; Jon Knight; Doctor X; steve; coyote; david; slave terry; Mister Rutkowski; david stein; Mike McDade; Mister Packer; Der Wolf; S. M. Yongue; Walter Klinger; Bud; Dr. Gayle Rubin; Joseph Bean; Patrick Califia; the Seattle, Princeton, and San Jose nightmares; the slave boy network; and, of course, my clients. Thank you all, especially for your patience with me.

Guy Baldwin, M.D.
Fall 2001

A note from Guy Baldwin, M.S.

The extreme end of the dominant/submissive power dynamic as the axis around which an intimate relationship revolves is clearly not for everyone. Even so, there is ample evidence that significant numbers of people resonate in both a sympathetic and harmonic way to this dynamic, apparently because it is so erotically compelling. Why should this be so?

For now, the correct answer must be that no one can really know for certain. To ever have any real hope of coming anywhere close to the answer would require carefully conducted research over a significant period of time. It would have to be done by a group of well-qualified and open-minded researchers with a huge budget. Neither the money nor the researchers could be subject to political, social, moral, or time pressures of any sort whatsoever. No such thing is likely to happen in any foreseeable time-frame that I can imagine. Why not?

The answer I'll offer here is that we live in a society where the vast majority of our population doesn't really want much definitive information about the psycho-dynamics of human sexuality as it manifests in our culture. While this is true for sexuality in general, it is most certainly the case regarding the more unusual sexualities such as the one represented here.

My guess about why this is so is that in-depth thinking about sex makes us nervous and anxious both as a society and as individuals. Most folks are only willing to think seriously about sex when it is problematic or otherwise concerning in their lives - personally a problem, that is. My work as a psychotherapist working with erotic minorities has revealed that even during erotically troubled times, people can be reluctant to undertake deep personal investigations about how their own sexuality is wired. It is almost as if we are trained from childhood to be anxious about sexuality. Frankly, were it not for the drive of our hormones and

the general unconsciousness of youth, I suspect there would be far fewer humans on this planet.

Most sexuality theorists have appeared from within the ranks of psychotherapists with various orientations and backgrounds. For the most part, they have based their theoretical speculations on observations of people who are troubled and seek treatment. Because such patient/clients are the most frequently studied group, there is every reason to suspect that the kind of balancing data that might come from those who are not troubled by their unusual sexuality is largely absent from researchers' thinking. Put simply, it is often the people who are most troubled about sexuality that are most influential in how researchers think about sexuality as a whole. The tragic history of professional thinking about homosexuality serves amply to make my point.

And so, what we get are some very strange ideas about how sexuality really works. Consequently, many that have a theoretical and academic interest in the mental underpinnings of sexuality have put forward a bewildering array of theories about how both common and uncommon sexualities develop. No big surprise.

Add to this the fact that the psychotherapists and researchers themselves come from a sexually nervous society, and objectivity becomes extra doubtful. And so, for the time being, the safest thing to say about erotic variation is simply that "it is." And if we proceed from the assumption that it is better to have information and not need it than it is to need information and not have it, then information is a good thing. The material I've presented in this book is offered to all in that spirit.

Regardless of how you may feel personally about people who pursue the bliss of consensual erotic slavery, one thing seems clear to me. Taken as a group, those for whom this pursuit is a serious interest are certainly one of the most passionate groups of people I've yet encountered. In a world where true pas-

sion is all too rare, regardless of the focus, I respect it. Profound commitment to anything that energizes the human spirit is a thing to be reckoned with and respected, if not appreciated for the pageantry with which it manifests itself.

Sometimes I have wished that there was better language available to describe this particular erotic fascination other than "Master and slave." That's because I fear that these words carry with them so much cultural and historical emotional baggage, that the process that unfolds between the participants can become obscured by that baggage. For a time, I considered different words to describe this dynamic, including: Overling/underling; Superior/inferior; Leader/follower; Mentor/student; even Dominant/submissive; and others. All alternatives fail to capture the spirit of the often elegant dance that unfolds between a Master and slave as these words do, most importantly, to the participants themselves.

There is always a risk associated with using any subculture's own words and labels to describe something to outsiders. Conventional understandings of the words "Master" and "slave" lack the tremendous range of feelings and nuances contained in these relationships. Nowhere is this more emphatically the case as when it comes to the abiding mutual affection and respect that pervades so many of the Master/slave relationships that I have been privileged to come to know in depth. The powerful bonding that takes place between Master and slave, whether for an evening or for a lifetime, is evidence that emotional forces are at work which are far beyond the pale of conventional social thinking about a Master/slave connection. Readers are cautioned to bear this in mind during the presentation of the material that follows.

My main area of focus has been these relationships as they unfold between adult gay men. Yet it has become very clear that most, if not all, of these issues also characterize such rela-

tionships between those of all the different orientations and gender possibilities. And so, I hope this material will be useful to others as well. Please translate the pronouns as necessary for a fuller understanding of the spirit in which this connection really happens between humans who have interest in the Master/slave experience.

Guy Baldwin, M.S.
Los Angeles 2001

A note from a grateful slave

One searching for the ecstasy of consensual slavery can learn a lot from what has been written here. my hope is that it will be enough to help those with this unusual vocation find their way home. i can promise that it will be a remarkable journey, whatever the outcome.

Sad to say, there are some who call themselves "Master" who are undeserving of the label. Some in need of an emotional hiding place will shield themselves behind the "Master" label. Lift the shield and one can often find those who shun real intimacy, self-disclosure, commitments of any sort, responsibility, honesty, their own vulnerability, self-knowledge, and yet, nevertheless, fear abandonment.

One in search of a Master (or a slave for that matter) is certain to encounter such people, and the challenge will be to discern the pretenders from the authentic. It is not enough for Masters to thrive on control; They must also crave responsibility and approach ownership with integrity, honor, honesty, common sense, and balance. There is no place in ownership for consuming rage, narcissism, viciousness, or other childish behavior. Ownership is for grown-ups.

It is vital that those of you on the slave journey gather enough information to distinguish the real ones from the pretenders, because your errors risk wasted time at the very least, and literal destruction at worst. Worthy Masters are at least as rare as worthy slaves. Until you are confident about your selection of a Master, you absolutely must retain responsible stewardship of your life. Remember that until you hand yourself over completely, the prime directive must be:

PROTECT THE PROPERTY....always!

a grateful slave, 1997

Publisher's Note

This book, *SlaveCraft*, contains some controversial subject matter.

What follows is a work of autobiographical literature which the publisher considers to be compelling, well written and important. The author provides some non-traditional, interesting and potentially beneficial opinions and philosophies on the concept of consensual slavery as it pertains to the BDSM/Leather lifestyle. Inevitably, some people will take issue or disagree with the author's viewpoint.

We are pleased to provide a rich bank of information and opinion on the subject of kink and sexuality as a whole. We offer authors a platform on which to air their alternative and sometimes divergent perspectives. *SlaveCraft* represents one person's contribution to that record. It is his perspective, opinion and experience, and it should not be presumed that these views are shared by the publisher or anyone else.

Ultimately, the reader must rely on his or her own thinking, feeling, values, and experience in determining how to approach situations like those discussed in this book. No two relationships are the same. We do not believe that the author intended this to be a universal "how to" book so much as a collection of individual experiences, hopes, and philosophies. It may serve the reader as a point of reference, a theoretical roadmap, to satisfy a curiosity, or simply as an enjoyable tourist excursion into the mind of one creative, intelligent, and sexually-kinked man.

As you delve into this book, you will notice that any ref-

erence to the first person (the author) appears in the lower case, and certain other words are capitalized in ways that deviate from standard English usage. These alternative conventions are routinely employed by some people within the BDSM community in writing about themselves and their lives.

Draft versions of the first seven essays in this book previously appeared in *International Leatherman* magazine in 1996 and 1997. Additional essays, along with expanded versions of the initial writings, were compiled to create *SlaveCraft*. Both the original draft essays and the writings that appear here are copyrighted and may not be reproduced elsewhere without express permission.

We hope you will find *SlaveCraft* to be as fascinating, challenging, and stimulating as we do.

Daedalus Publishing Company

INTRODUCTION

By Patrick Califia, M.A.

It is no light matter to comment on the work of Guy Baldwin. He was already part of the leadership of the leather community when I came out as a sadomasochist in the mid-'70s. A former International Mr. Leather, licensed psychotherapist, and prolific author, Baldwin's keen insight makes him an authoritative observer of the BDSM scene. He has lent support to many important events that have bolstered the cause of leather pride and freedom, from the revision of the definitions of "sexual masochism" and "sexual sadism" in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV to the participation of leathersmen and women in a series of gay rights marches on Washington, D.C. For many of us, Baldwin is a prototypical "Old Guard" leatherman, yet someone who is also able to bridge the gap between newer players and the traditionalists.

I'm also proud to own a decades-long friendship with him that has weathered many a controversy. Although he and I have sometimes found ourselves on opposite sides when it comes to discussing political tactics, we have an unshakable mutual respect. Each of us understands that the other has nothing but the welfare and the improvement of our status as a sexual minority on his agenda.

It's a challenge to introduce work penned by a long-time gay male leathersex icon, as well as someone I love and cherish as a brother. I surely can't make any claims to being an objective reader of the work that you are holding to the light at this very moment. Parts of this book brought tears to my eyes, they rang so true, and other parts of it are not consistent with my own experience in the realm of Master/slave relationships. That's because

S/M is an art, not a science. There are many approaches to S/M sex and relationships; people enter this realm with goals and methods as unique as their own individuality.

This work of Baldwin's goes far beyond the superficial realm of the "how-to" book or safety manual. It is, I believe, actually a work about mysticism, and the self-discipline that is necessary if one wishes to behold the blissful face of one's creator. For Baldwin, and through him the grateful slave, erotic slavery has become a sort of lay monkhood, and the Master an archetype of the kind of divinity that remakes a mortal man and ushers him into a new state of being. To say this is, I am well aware, blasphemy. But in an age when religion has been evoked to justify mass murder, forced sterilization, rape, torture, disenfranchisement, and a dozen other heinous crimes against the weak and disregarded, we must sometimes become heretics if we are going to achieve purity, understanding, or transcendence.

Although it's not at all conventional to do so, I have chosen to enter into a dialogue with *SlaveCraft* rather than merely praise it to the skies for a few pages and have done with it. I've called this dialogue, *MasterCraft*, and it appears as the Afterward at the end of this book. I'm doing this, not out of disrespect for Baldwin's experience or premises, but because I think his ideas are serious enough to merit response and discussion. I am also aware that many people will pick up this book hoping for a pragmatic roadmap into fulfilling 24-7 servitude. So I've tried to fill in a few potholes in this difficult path.

Baldwin's treatise on erotic slavery is addressed "to both aspiring and experienced submissives, more especially to those who are self-identified as slaves." (p. 29) He speaks only to dominant/submissive relationships between men. Of course, this specialization also gives the book clarity and authenticity. Baldwin properly refuses to speak to relationship configurations he has not personally experienced. But the desire to be a slave or claim

human property for one's erotic use cuts across all lines of gender and sexual orientation.* So, the Afterward portion of the book, at least, is for a more general readership. I hope the material I've brought together there will be seen as a supplement to Baldwin's brilliant exposition rather than a criticism or dilution of his central points.

///////

Most gay, lesbian, and bi people are familiar with the concept of internalized homophobia. Theoretically, when you grow up and live in a society that is hostile to same-sex love or eroticism, it's very difficult to shed those prejudices, even if you are a member of the hated minority group. Sometimes I think this term is overworked. (Just about anything another queer does that a gay or bi person dislikes or disagrees with can be labeled "internalized homophobia.") But I think it also has some validity. Perhaps we should avoid activist jargon and instead talk about shame. No matter how good our lives are, it's hard for gay or bi people to eliminate all feelings of shame or inferiority about man-to-man or woman-to-woman connections. Confronting prejudice is difficult not just because it's hard to go up against people who disparage us, but because it brings up all our own unresolved issues, the negative internal voices that say, "I'm not really OK, there's something wrong with me, I'm not as good as those other people who are doing what they are supposed to do."

Transgendered activists have popularized the term "transphobia," and "internalized transphobia" cannot be far behind. In *The Ties That Bind*, (1993) Baldwin coined the term "kinkophobia" to designate prejudice against power-exchange sex. We might say that internalized kinkophobia is the unique sense of shame that many, if not most, sadomasochists feel about their participation in a deviant activity.

On a rational level, I'm well aware that our society vali-

dates only a thin slice of the huge continuum of pleasure-seeking behavior that human beings actually engage in. When I run down my checklist of "ways to tell if something is a bad thing to do," my S/M sexuality gets a clean bill of health. But no matter how much fun the sex is, how close my relationships are, or how moving and spiritually important this aspect of my life is, there is a residue of self-hatred. I keep working on reducing it, and by the time I am ready to retire, perhaps it will be only a thin scatter of dry crumbs, insufficient to keep even a mouse alive.

Master/slave relationships come in for their share of disparagement and embarrassment, even within the S/M community, in part because of the internalized shame that makes us afraid of or contemptuous of these central parts of ourselves. As a form of S/M that many believe is pretty extreme, Owner/property bonds both freak pervy people out enough to make them roll their eyes and get some of us hot enough to touch ourselves (repeatedly). This might be funny if it wasn't so expensive emotionally. That voice which says, "My sexuality is pathological and dangerous, and I shouldn't be doing this" is also responsible, I believe, for some of the cavalier ways that tops and bottoms treat each other. Baldwin has a pointed quote to this effect:

"i sometimes hear Tops and Masters complain about how much work it is to do Their thing. Occasionally, the implication is that slaves don't have any work to do apart from accepting whatever They do and following orders - that being a bottom and/or slave is all about being passive." (p. 67)

This stereotype of the passive bottom or slave would not exist if we were not, as a community, devaluing the high spirits and earnest efforts of those who wear their keys on the right. As long as I've been out as a sadomasochist, I've heard that cliché about bottoms outnumbering tops. I think this belief comes from

the same place: an attitude that bottoms are somehow disposable or surplus, not quite real people. It's certainly true that I have not met very many people in the leather community who mirror my experience as a top and a sadist. But it's also true that I have not met very many bottoms, masochists, or slaves who are my complement. The people who like the same things that I do, and want me to do those things with them, are few and far between. In my book, that makes them precious.

I believe that *SlaveCraft* is an important book, one that can teach us more about manifesting our core desires in real relationships. As a therapist I see over and over again how reparative it is when people find affirming relationships. And I also see what a struggle it can be for anyone, of any gender identity, sexual orientation, or erotic persuasion, to find that level of intimacy. I'd like to conclude with a hope that this will become easier, in the new Millennium, as all of us work to make this poor injured world a more sexually sane place to live.

Patrick Califia, M.A. 2001

*I use the term "erotic slavery" to make a distinction between proprietary S/M relationships based on a contract between consenting adults and the nonconsensual slavery which has an economic basis. This distinction seems very important to make even though some S/M Owners do not choose to make sexual use of their slaves, and sexual exploitation is often the lot of an unwilling chattel.

A Word About the Following Essays

The goal of the essays collected here is to offer some practical ideas to those who want to experience consensual erotic slavery as a path to sublime bliss. The essays proceed from the following assumptions:

- Most Masters understand very little about how erotic slavery really works in the slave mind.
- Slaves can learn important and useful things about slavery from other slaves.
- Slavery and slaving feels better to both Masters and slaves when guided by a set of relevant principles and the tools specific to them.
- These principles and tools can be refined into a set of skills that improve the quality of a slave's service.
- This refinement is something slaves owe to both their Masters and themselves because it can make the Master/slave experience transcendent for both.

These and other ideas have been put forward at length in the following essays, and the above summary is not intended to be a useful substitute for the careful examination of them. If your servitude matters to you, you are advised to read them because something in them may be helpful now, or perhaps later. Likewise, if you are a person who is mystified by the slave mind and you wish to understand it better, then what follows may also be useful for you as one slave's perspective. If the Master/slave experience interests you personally, then it is perhaps better to have these ideas and not need them than to need them and not have them. And so, on to the essays.



His boots, a blessing;
Scents transcendent.
Tears 'til morning
swell the river.

Essay 1: The Call to Submission

This essay and those that follow are directed to both aspiring and experienced submissives, most especially to those who are self-identified as slaves, although others may find them of interest as well. By my use of the word "submissive" i do not intend to convey any suggestion whatsoever of weakness or powerlessness, but rather, simply one who submits to the will of another for the purposes of mutual satisfaction and fulfillment.

This isn't about who has "Power." It's my belief that both Master and slave must have "Power". The Master/slave experience is all about Authority.

Although there is probably no easy way to be certain, it seems that most of the reading material having to do with the Dominant/submissive experience has been fictional. It appears that, for some of us, there is some mysterious instinct that commands ink and hormones to flow in unison. But whatever the reason, these stories are readily available for those who enjoy them. Such fiction is nice to have, and we could all think of reasons to be glad for it and those who produce it.

But fictional material on this topic has left much terrain unexplored and, therefore, unmapped for others to follow. For those of us who are seriously interested in traveling in person rather than vicariously in those thickest regions of the Dominant/submissive forests, the large fiction library is frequently useless at best and harmful at worst. It is rather like looking down on a great rain forest from a chartered plane instead of feeling your own naked feet slogging through the pathless primordial, inhaling the earth, smells, sounds, textures, terrors, and treasures alike.

So, with this, and the essays that follow, i will offer a road map to a deep and sublime state of blissful surrender. This

road map is the one i have followed and use today. With this book, it is my intention to share what i have learned and now believe about erotic submission in its deeper places. i want to believe that, if studied carefully by others, it could lead to some of the same treasures i have found. Included are the attitudes, ideas, information, opinions, and speculations that i wish had been available to me earlier in my life. i offer these in the hope that something here will be useful to others and perhaps spare you and those you serve wasted time and unwanted pain. i assume there must be other information about submission based on different "paths" through the Dominant/submissive forests, but i can only know and report the experience as it has been for me.

Although it frightens me to think about it, there is a possibility that my discoveries about erotic submission and surrender may not be true for many others, or may not even be true for anyone else. i don't know. my efforts here proceed from the opposite assumption; that the maps, tools, and techniques that submissives use do have at least some things in common and that we can share those things to learn from each other. Hopefully, this will make the journey faster and easier both for ourselves and for those we serve.

But be warned. i shall be passionate here about the telling of these things and aggressive in my attempts to illuminate, persuade, and perhaps even guide with them. And i expect that this will offend and annoy some who may say, "This slave is a smart-ass who thinks this way is the only way-or the best way." And to these critics i will say now that all i know is that these are the only ways i know to get to where i am, and that if others want what i have, this is how i got here. And "here" is, for me, the absolute bliss of surrender and submission to the Master in whose home i am currently permitted to live and serve. And, lastly, i am commanded to reveal all this information and sincerely hope it

will be helpful. So, think of me what you will. Even having offered my disclaimers, you will anyway.

Heeding the Call

As children, when we were given our first pencil to scribble with, we scrawled gleefully and knew nothing of the vast potentials contained in our simple, little toy. The pencils we played with during our innocence could later be used to move a nation to war, discover a cure, draw a masterpiece, or merely prepare a grocery list. Likewise, the first time we truly submit to the will of a partner during sex and are suddenly, and without warning, tornado-swept away in a revelation of ecstasy, we do not even begin to imagine the possibilities contained in our surrender. Even so, we know we have felt and experienced something significant, powerful and wonderful.

It is probable that for most who experience it, the ride in that tornado is, itself, the focus, and it becomes just another one of life's many great rides nothing more. They may never give it another thought, or even want to repeat the experience. And that is fine. The deep submission of slavery does not beckon to these people.

But for a few of us, this flavor of erotic ecstasy fascinates us and we wonder about it. Just how does this experience work? Can we, or should we, learn to steer the tornado of submission somehow without destroying it or being destroyed by it? And so, some of us try to learn just how to ride the wild winds of submission, always hopeful that they will return us to that ecstasy. When the search for this ecstasy becomes self-defining, we are baptized as submissives - those who seek the experience, understanding, and refinement of ecstasy that comes from submitting to the will of another. It is not only something we do; it is something we are. Being a submissive is, of course, simply one of many possible erotic orientations.

Different subs (submissives) tend to emphasize different aspects of the experience. Some just pursue the experience and turn a blind eye to understanding or refinement. Others avoid the experience for various reasons and focus instead on understanding their own and others' experiences. Some go after refinement either with or without understanding. And so on, in all possible combinations. All this is usually not a conscious process for most subs. Yet, for a small number of us, it is entirely conscious.

Still fewer explorers discover that, for us, there is a relationship between the type, quality, depth, and frequency of our submission and the ecstasy that blooms within us. Slavehood beckons, and some will wonder about it seriously. It sometimes dawns on these subs that submission is a tool that it can be a tornado - a magic carpet for transport to ecstasy, but that there may also be other uses for the tool of submission, other destinations the tornado of submission can be used to visit. And very few of us become curious about these other possible destinations. As a tool, just how much can it do? Can it carry us to destinations beyond time and space? To wizards perhaps? It is primarily for these few that i write, although as i mentioned earlier, others may also be interested.

Arguing With Destiny

i am always amazed at the range of talents people possess. i have noticed that, quite often, when a person has multiple talents, some of them are more likely to be explored, exploited, and developed than others. It must be a rare individual indeed that organizes his life to optimize all his talents. i'm sure i've never met one. It seems to me that most such multi-talented folks eventually decide which talents will receive their focus and which will be put aside for the time being, perhaps longer, or even forever. Often, the decision to specialize coincides with the development of maturity in a personality. We come to see that it

is preferable to do one, two, or a few things really well, rather than spread our time and ourselves too thinly. And so, since we can not normally be in two places at the same time, we must decide whether to spend time living in a monastery or spend that same time learning and practicing law or medicine, or pursuing our interests in slavery.

Also, with the development of maturity, our notions about time begin to change. Many of us come to see that we can have nearly anything we want, but can't have everything we want. We must choose, for the shortness of life will not allow us to have or do everything all at once.

And we do this choosing in different ways. We choose based on what money the pursuit will earn for us or cost us; or we choose based on how well we can do it, or how easily it comes to us, or how much fun it is, or how satisfying it is to do; or we choose based on how others will react if we don't do it. And, of course, once chosen, we can, and sometimes do, change our minds as we discover more about it or about ourselves doing it.

But some of us choose it because we must do it; because no other pursuit makes any sense to us. We choose it because we don't----perhaps can't----feel nearly as much passion about anything else. And passion is like a butterfly, hovering above the fields of life in bloom. It has a will of its own. The issue then is whether to surrender to and honor the place where our passion leads us, or whether to deny it, ignore it, turn away and force our lives to turn aside towards another destination. But for some of us, it is our passion that dictates our destiny.

All this is a preamble to making my point that, for some of us, our passion alights on the flower of submission. And when it does so, we must face the same decision faced by all passionate people: whether to acknowledge and honor passion's call or not.

As it happens, there are several types of major cultural institutions that really do allow, encourage, or even require sub-

mission in widely varying degrees. Among these are religion, the military, certain professions, government, crime, fraternities, commercial ventures, competitive sports, and families. Sometimes submission (and/or dominance) is an outright requirement as a condition of participation in these types of human activities, depending on the specific group in question.

There is no way to estimate the number of people who may secretly get their Dominant and/or submissive needs met in these types of circumstances. This may happen unconsciously or not, depending on how self-aware a particular person might be. We probably all know of people in the Master/slave world who spent important and meaningful time in military service, or perhaps were involved in a religious setting until they discovered that they wanted something more, something deeper and more personal, and yes, something expressly erotic.

"He who hears not the music, thinks the dancers mad."

--attributed to RUMI

But, as it turns out, we live in a time when mainstream culture views the personal, erotic submission of one person to the will of another in ways that do not validate it as a legitimate activity, process, meditation, or destiny. In the cultures where our kind of erotic submission is practiced, it is not accepted as a sufficient experience around which one can organize or build an identity, life, future or relationship, either with oneself or with another.

It isn't too difficult to understand that a person might build these things around a law practice, the mastery of the Japanese Tea Ceremony, understanding the migration patterns of Caribou, or the study of Buddhist monks. In general, contemporary society is prepared to validate all these as acceptable passions to which one might devote his life. But no such validation

is conferred upon those of us who would choose to discover and examine the universe through the lens offered by personal, erotic submission. Outsiders are not prepared to understand that the passion of surrender has the power to take hold of us by the throat and fire our imaginations to the white heat capable of fusing sexuality and surrender into such a lens - a tool powerful enough to comprehend anything worth knowing.

This absence of external validation seriously complicates decisions for those of us whose passion lays in submission. "Can i walk away from my fellowship at the university to move to another city to be Mr. J's slave?" or "Is there a way for me to pursue my career and really offer myself to someone as a candidate slave?" And so, we agonize about it.

Even among communities of self-accepting sado-masochists, those who would make lifestyle commitments based on their passion for submission (or dominance, for that matter) are usually viewed as extremists or somehow "on the fringe." And i suppose if the numbers are any indication, then perhaps we *are* extremists. But numbers do not tell the whole story. Few have walked on the Moon, but we do not call them extremists. No, the charge of extremism is leveled at those of us who would build our lives around submission, most probably because of what Mister Baldwin has previously called "kink-o-phobia."¹ He points out that the farther one gets from sex which results in a socially approved pregnancy, the less validation one receives. Okay, so perhaps we're extremists. So what?

In the final analysis, the issue is whether one will or will not honor his passion. To back away from the passionate call of deep and ongoing submission and slavery, one risks his integrity and self-respect. Turning away means building into one's aware-

1. Baldwin, Guy, M.S. TIES THAT BIND, Daedalus Publishing Company, Los Angeles, 1993, p. 34

ness the knowledge that he is hiding from something important inside himself. The consequences are eventually the same as when a gay person denies their gayness. A war within the self inevitably ensues. These sorts of wars create friction within one's psychology and act as a drag on one's creativity and spontaneity. Such internal wars and the fallout from them are the enemies of anyone's serenity and happiness.

Psychotherapists of both traditional and new age persuasions alike constantly remind us that living congruently is a central key to happiness. Put simply, living congruently means that we run our lives honestly and according to the truth of who we discover ourselves to be. They tell us that we must do this in a way that integrates all the parts of ourselves into a unified whole. For this part of my discussion, honoring one's call to submission is really a journey towards self-acceptance, one of the important keys to the temple wherein profound personal transformation takes place.

Most often, the thing that is responsible for not honoring one's passion for submission is Fear. Some who hear and feel the call of submission fear that it might mean the loss of, or destruction of, one's Self: "Who will i be if i surrender absolutely?" Others fear that no one will want to Master them. "What if no one wants me?" We may fear that if we explore submission too deeply, we won't ever enjoy any other kinds of sexuality. "If i go too far, maybe i won't ever be able to be anything other than a slave."

But in life, the pursuit of great reward often means taking great risk. Those who launched for the Moon knew they were risking their lives, and others who have launched for space have paid that price. Even changing from a good job to a better job carries with it the risk that the new situation won't work out. Entering a doctoral program does not guarantee a position upon graduation. Getting married does not necessarily mean "til death

us do part." Choosing to beget a child does not guarantee that it will be born healthy and will not become a serial murderer.

The bliss of surrender in slavery is a wondrous thing - a rare and treasured delight not savored by many. To achieve it, we must approach the temple wherein it awaits those who have prepared themselves for the journey in the spirit of adventure, reverence, and courage.

Know this: slavery requires bravery.

If you're not courageous enough to make yourself take the risks, then i suggest that you go out and insert yourself into programs designed to help you find your own bravery within yourself. If you are too frightened to proceed toward the realization of your slave passion, then the acquisition of this courage must be the first part of your preparation for the journey into submission.

There is no shame in being fearful. It is only a shame to remain so. And this shame is esteem-killing and destroys integrity and self-respect. Who can afford that? Besides, what worthwhile Master wants to try things with a slave wannabe who is paralyzed by his fears and has no self-respect? It is not that you must do away with all fear. It is that you must find enough courage within yourself to prevent your fears from paralyzing you to the point where you will be unable to submit enough to actively seek your bliss in surrender.

Each of us who hears the call of slavehood must accept responsibility for our fears about it and wrestle with those fears. Few Masters possess the skills or the desire necessary to overcome our fears for us. And many slaves who have transcended their fears are themselves with Masters and, therefore, not generally available to support novice slaves through their battles with these fears. No, the early steps must be taken alone, in our heads

or, more accurately, in our hearts, for we know the truth about who and what we are.

It is exciting to see that, at long last, there is evidence that the fraternity of Master/slave disciples has begun to coalesce into a viable thing. Thoughtful discourse about various approaches to this kind of a life have been emerging in print media and on the Internet for a while now, and it seems that things are finally going to reach a critical mass such that real ignition now seems inevitable. And as the individual fires that burn in our bellies meet and join with others, the flame will serve to light a way for others to find us--and themselves--and find this special joy.

Masters are making careful contact with other Masters who see things as They do and are beginning to share what They are learning about Themselves, Their Dominant process, and the way They handle slaves and how it all works and feels. Likewise, slaves are reaching out to other slave brothers and supporting each other through the emotional minefields that could halt our journey toward our slave selves. Slowly, isolation is giving way to connections and contact. Many of us have come to see that we will do better with all this when we forge meaningful relationships with one another based on shared interest, rather than trying to confront obstacles in isolation. It is an exciting time.

No doubt, the birth of this once abstract fraternity will be accompanied by some predictable difficulties. Even so, i am encouraged about the eventual outcome, by the enormous respect that we evidence for each other, and for the experience itself as we struggle to come to terms with the issues of the lifestyle, and this particular love.

Essay 2

The Myth of "Slave Training"

There were many blind alleys down which i ventured in my search for the bliss of slavery. All of them promised success, and i suppose that each, in its own way, was useful to one degree or another. Most of these provided useful information about how *not* to pursue slavery. Others provided hints that later showed themselves to be helpful, if not the whole story.

Of all the troublesome blind alleys i have investigated, none has caused me more trouble than the myth of "slave training." So i offer what follows as a reflection of what my experience has taught me in the hope that it will be useful to others.

The traditional slave-training myth asserts that:

"Any self-proclaimed Master can teach a slave all he needs to know about surrender."

Maybe one reason this myth persists is because there is a common belief that since many kinky people switch back and forth across the Master/slave role boundary, the best teacher a slave could have is a good Dominant who also has enjoyed submission. It has become my opinion that this is not necessarily true and, furthermore, is probably rarely true. Switching is fine for those who enjoy it and do so by honest desire rather than because of circumstance, so the following is not intended to be critical of those who switch. While switching works well for those who enjoy it, i don't think that one's experience switching is always automatically helpful for slave education when a person who is a switch is in His "Master head."

To begin with, good teaching skills do not automatically

come with being a Dominant or Master, switch, slave, or anything else for that matter. Secondly, for those who switch, the information about, and experience with submission may be insufficient in either quantity or quality to be of much use at all. Third, a Master who himself previously may have been a slave, faced challenges in his earlier slavery that were unique to his own situation at the time. Those difficulties may have been very different from the challenges that a slave He is trying to "train" now might be wrestling with today. Thus, His previous experiences as a slave may be useless in guiding Him in "training" now.

Fourth, and most importantly, even when there is adequate experience with high-quality submission, it is not at all clear that switches take all the information from one role with them into the other role during a Scene - an erotic encounter. Or, when they do take information back and forth across the Dominant/submissive role boundary, they do so mostly from the neck up. By that i mean that it's all mostly in Their heads rather than in Their hearts or guts. It is intellectual and, therefore, far less useful.

Put differently, when we switch into the other role, we may take some of the information with us, but not the passion, which we must leave behind in order to perform honestly in the new role. i earnestly doubt that it is possible to be in two "passion" places or "headspaces" at the same time and still do a very good job. i have come to believe that those who switch must become their "other" selves, so to speak, and relocate their passion into the new role. Those who can't, or won't, do this almost guarantee losing the chance to establish a powerful and meaningful connection to their partners during the Scene. (And for the Master/slave team, the "Scene" is virtually never ending, varying only in intensity according to the Master's desire and the condition of the slave at any given moment.)

i suspect that this may be because the information about a role only really comes to life when it is coupled with that role's

passion. Without that passion to bring it to life, the information is just lifeless data and, thus, only partially useful for slave education: like instant coffee without water.

So, when we find someone who is truly slave identified deciding to Top someone as a Master for the night, the fire just isn't there unless the slave passion can be set aside, the Master passion found somewhere within, and then brought out into sustained full bloom. Otherwise, the encounter is likely to be flat, technical, and unsatisfying for both players.

Or worse, those who are really slave-identified and force themselves to Top - without passion - for various reasons, can perhaps find themselves playing from an angry or hostile place, possibly jealous of the bottom's opportunity for joy, and wishing to punish him unconsciously. Violence, and not SM, is too frequently the outcome in these instances. Many of us have heard about such Scenes, and the results can sometimes be flat at best, or truly ugly in the worst instances, for both players.

To teach a slave more about submission, especially the subtle refinements and internal processes of deep submission, the teacher must first feel the deep passion of submission itself, and/or have a truly meaningful understanding of the process behind the feelings. And the teaching must be done from that passion. Because They don't live in slave passion, it is unreasonable to expect such teaching from Dominant/Master types, and it is unreasonable of Them to expect it of Themselves. And, it is also unreasonable to expect it from switches who likely don't possess great teaching skills, and may not even know much about the more elaborate backwaters of submission themselves.

This situation is all the more true for Dominants/Masters who do not switch, and never did. These men usually know even less about submission, except perhaps that They don't enjoy it

Themselves! Most of the non-switching Masters i have spoken with honestly about these things usually tell me that They are often mystified by submissives, both bottoms and slaves, and cannot understand why we enjoy submission, or, more importantly, how we do it.

It therefore stands to reason that information about surrender from most such Dominants/Masters is guesswork, or hearsay at best, or just plain mistaken, at worst. Gradually, i have come to believe that most such Masters want "already up to speed" slaves who They don't have to invest very much time in trying to "train" into submission, or explain much beyond how They like Their laundry folded and eggs cooked.

Although i know that there are rare exceptions, my experience has been that, as a group, Masters are not much into delayed gratification when it comes to quality submission. They want what They want, when They want it. And They want it on time, in time, every time, so to speak. And They want it with a minimum of fuss and attitude. These are guys who like getting their own way, after all.

Furthermore, to most (not all) Masters, "slave training" means nothing more to Them than issuing orders and rules which may later be followed by corrections in our performance. It feels good to us when we hear orders because orders tell us what They want to happen, but orders and corrections are only the jumping-off point in the submission process. Masters can tell us to obey, but They are usually at a loss to explain to us where we are to reach down inside and find it in ourselves to do so. Even more so whenever those orders bump up against any internal slave obstacles, encounter internal reluctance, or lack of experience.

And so, when we disappoint Them, or don't know how to follow where Masters lead, They can sometimes become frustrated, disappointed, and may even accuse us of not being truly submissive, or dedicated to our surrender, or of being insincere in our desire to submit. i find this reaction from Masters generally

abusive and more often, a reflection of Their lack of understanding rather than an accurate evaluation of a slave's sincerity. Even worse, blaming from Masters is often accompanied by blaming from inside ourselves as well, and we can sometimes begin to question our own legitimacy as slaves or even the entire notion of slavery itself. And so, when this happens, situations fall apart, and nobody feels good.

Additionally, very few people, Masters or slaves for that matter, have much, if any, information at all about pain processing (thanks for the phrase, Mr. Bean). Some Dominants/Masters want to apply body stress (a Cynthia Slater phrase intended to be an alternative to "pain") to slaves to satisfy Their sadistic pleasure appetites. Usually, They want us to deal with it in ways that permit, and sometimes even encourage Them to continue until They choose to stop. And how we deal with Them as sadists depends on the slave's pain processing capabilities.

How likely is it that very many Masters are going to be very knowledgeable here? Not likely at all because Masters typically avoid pain or discomfort at all costs. No, these skills are the province of skilled bottoms, slaves, and masochists, and such skills are usually best learned from those who have them - other slaves who use them, understand how they work, and are skilled teachers. As a Master acquaintance of mine has observed, "The best way to train a new puppy is to pair it with an older dog."

Fortunately, most Masters do not need in-depth understanding of submission to do a good job of pleasing themselves, although, the more They know, the easier and more fun Their lives will be. It is my opinion that, for most Masters, what understanding about deep submission They do have will usually be an intellectual one at best anyway. It is very useful for Masters to develop a clear understanding of a slave's individual personality so that Masters can provide us with the opportunities to manifest our slave destiny in the context of service and, with skilled sup-

ported development, gradually reposition our limits to suit Their appetites.

After all, only rarely do gourmets teach chefs how to cook; chefs usually learn their art from other chefs. Servants are taught by other servants, not by the Lord of the Manor. Dominants order the pizza, or order it to be ordered; unless cooking is Their hobby. They have no idea about how a great pizza is made. Racecar drivers don't build 'em, they just drive 'em. I believe that the vast majority of Masters, when They get very honest, often feel the same way about slaves.

Regrettably, the situation is made even more complicated and confused by the fact that a very few of us are lucky enough to intuitively find these skills within ourselves early on during our slaving, without benefit of much direct explanation from anyone. These rare slave creatures are called "naturals," but for the majority of those who aspire to deep slavery, these abilities must either be learned by long-term trial and error, or go unlearned altogether. Sadly, the existence of these "naturals" in the Master/slave world creates the illusion that unless it comes "naturally," one is somehow irreparably flawed as a slave, (or as a Master, for that matter.)

The slave-training myth (that any self-proclaimed Master can teach slaves all we want or need to know about submission) is especially troublesome because it encourages aspiring slaves to believe that we can't learn anything that will be useful about surrender without first being selected by a Master for "training". And so, deciding to honor the impassioned call of slavery, novice slaves undertake so called "training" experiences with Masters, or those claiming to be interested in Mastery. Obedience and compliance do not add up to training at all, as most Masters of my experience like to believe. Most such "training" turns out to be little more than exposure to, and experience with, opportunities to Obey - definitely not the same thing.

These early pseudo-training experiences often tend to be frightening or unsatisfying, or both. The expectations of both Master and slave are usually twisted into strange and unworkable shapes by the unfortunate influences of the slave training myth. That is, unless, the slave just happens to connect with the rare Master who does really know how to take us to deeper places. Thanks to the slave-training myth, problems also arise in the minds of Masters, most especially the novices. They often feel inadequate because They know They have only limited information about the inner dynamics of a slave's submission.

Masters or wannabe Masters might, for example, want the kitchen organized and food prepared, but have only the vaguest clues about how these things are really done. A famous Master of my acquaintance whose slave died some time ago lamented to me that he has not had really excellent coffee in the mornings since that loss.

Masters can distinguish good cocksuckers from great ones, but are usually at a loss to explain how that difference is achieved - more practice is simply not enough. Or, for an even more exotic example, how it is that a slave makes mental and/or spiritual contact with his butt hole without drugs such that it will open to admit a fist or more. Admittedly, there are some Masters who possess such information, but, in my experience, most Masters don't know much about these things, don't want to know much, and don't think They should have to know these things. None of this is a criticism of Masters, merely a description of how i have perceived Them to be as a group.

As an aside here, one of the great ironies in all of this is that the training myth is often responsible for impeding both Masters and slaves in the refinement of their respective callings. Masters who feel insecure with Their abilities because of their ignorance about submission, or for other reasons, will often seek an inexperienced slave precisely because he won't know much.

This allows the insecure Master to hide His ignorance from the slave and be superficially impressive. The irony is that such Masters could probably learn much more from experiences with already skilled slaves because then They could see how a well-developed slave functions, and thus learn the crafts of how to enjoy and develop a consensual slave.

Likewise, novice slaves can learn more at the feet of experienced and knowledgeable Masters than is possible with novice Masters. Unfortunately, the training myth works to keep novice Masters connecting up with novice slaves instead of serving to pair players of opposite skill levels from whom beginners have the most to learn. Consequently, those most in need of exposure to skilled players are the least likely ones to make the right connections and grow into their respective callings as Master or slave. This wastes time.

And yes, this is definitely part of a larger argument in favor of the multiple consensual ownership of tiered slaves in one household, and good networking between Master/slave households, too. It also argues for the development of a strong Master/slave community in which novices have the chance to see well-developed submissives at work in positive settings, both erotic and non-erotic. And, equally important, for Masters to learn the subtle craft and skill-set by which REAL training does happen----the process by which we really do learn about deeper submission from a Master, rather than from some other slave.

It is the genius of Masters to take pleasure from using us in various ways as Their mood and needs dictate. It is the genius of slaves to receive pleasure in being useful in the widest possible variety of ways. It is up to Masters to know what pleasures They want, not how we can deliver. That is our job. When They do happen to understand the deeper dynamics of submission, that is a bonus, but to me it seems unwise to count on it, especially so

because Masters so rarely put Themselves into situations where They could learn that craft from fellow Masters.

Therefore, it is up to us to do the most we can to develop ourselves into the ultimate pleasure toys and tools for Them. i believe we owe this to Them. It is our slave capacity to provide pleasure and be otherwise useful that can earn us a place in Their worlds. The only thing that holds any possible hope of our being kept on in that role is our ability to keep up with Their appetites for pleasure and be useful.

Love, if it happens, is not usually enough to ensure that we'll be kept around. Sooner or later, Their appetites will demand feeding.

All too rare are the Masters for whom "training" means something more than giving orders and correcting compliance. A sadly small percentage of the Masters i know savors the often delicately balanced orchestrations by which a slave does truly develop a deeper level of surrender under Their direction. These Masters delight in devising subtle situations and conversations that challenge and guide us. They watch us closely to see how we wrestle with our inner struggles with surrender, and then determine the best way to coax, tease, kiss, lure, argue, reason, support, reinforce, hurt, or love us onward past our sticking points and into doing or accepting exactly what They want from us.....AND, making us love Them for it! This is the REAL craft of "slave-training", and lucky is the slave who comes to the attention of these rare Masters. Bonding with these Masters is vastly accelerated for us, and we often feel close to helpless before Them....Yum!!

Having said all this, the plan for the following essays is to share what i have learned, and to illuminate the processes by which i found the skills necessary for deep surrender to a Master. i will offer information about a philosophy of surrender, and the

specific tools for submission that grow out of that philosophy, and try my best to explain how they work. Although i have said this in the previous essay, i must again point out that these ideas have worked well for me and that they have helped me in my quest for the bliss of slavery. They are the road map i use today, and they agree with the Master in the home where i am currently permitted to live and serve. These ideas are offered in the hopes that they can help others find the same sorts of pleasures that have come to me, and prevent others from wasting any more time, because.....

Wasted Time is Wasted Passion.

Essay 3

Finding my slavery

Part I: -How the perspective developed

"When you do something, you should burn yourself up in it completely, like a good bonfire, leaving no trace of yourself."

--Shunryu Suzuki

From the little Zen calendar, 1996

Beginning as a whisper from the back rooms of our minds, for some of us, the call to slavery rises into a passionate scream demanding attention and action. How fast this call becomes amplified into something we can't ignore is determined by many variables. Among them are the quality of our early slaving experiences; the quality of people we encounter in the SM and Master/slave worlds, and our social skills with them; how willing we are to do some reading about it; what values we were socialized with in the first place; and others.

Unless we decide to turn off the reasoning parts of our minds with drugs or other mechanisms of denial, we will have to somehow reckon with our appetite for slavery. We'll have to think about it and try to determine its place in our lives. Some who hear the call of slavery will surrender to it immediately because nothing else makes any sense. But many others must engage in some deep mental probing before actual experiences at slaving are pursued.

i tried to do the thinking and feeling as i went along. Following each experience as a slave, i spent time with myself and with my feelings, deciding what had worked and what had not. Was i relieved when the Scene was over, or did i pray it

would never end? How did i decide if i wanted to repeat with the Man or not? Did i feel physically and emotionally safe enough, or did i feel too safe? How much of the insecurity He fostered was sexy and how much wasn't? How well did He read me? How readable was i? Did i ask too many questions up front? Did He know how to support me? Was i able to support Him well during our time together?

Sometimes i recorded my thoughts on tape, and sometimes i made notes of my impressions. i sensed that it might be dangerous in ways i couldn't even imagine if i were to allow myself to ignore my thoughts and feelings about the slaving experiences i was having and the appetite itself. i forced myself to pay attention to my thoughts and feelings. In short, i was afraid not to listen to myself in order to understand what i was feeling, and where those feelings might eventually lead me. In the early years, it was my fear that drove my need to understand. i did not want to be destroyed. In fact, i longed to be created.

And i longed to be created as a fine and useful male property; one with a great range of services i could provide. i hoped to be able to use the full range of my personality in the service of a fine Master: my humor, wit, intelligence, loyalty, devotion, industry, sexuality, and passion. All of it. i thought about how i might prepare myself to become such a treasure.

At first, i fell prey to the myth of slave training and wasted much time being distracted by it. Once it became clear that i could not expect to be transformed into a slave by some Master, my quest for the bliss of surrender felt frustrated and i fell into hopelessness for a time before i began to reconsider the problem. i knew there was real joy in slavery, if only i could find it. i had to trust that the deep craving for it within me would not lead me down a blind alley to an empty joke. i do not believe the universe in itself, is cruel. It's certainly unfair, but not cruel.

Sometimes, how we look at a thing determines what we see and how we respond. Here's an experiment for you. Try looking straight down at a glass with some water in it. You will quickly discover that its much easier to tell how much water is in the glass when you look from the side rather than from above.

Looked at from the vantage points offered by fictional stories, slavery, like the glass viewed from above, at first glance, can appear to be merely a trivial, two-dimensional, erotic behavior that is not deserving of any serious attention. my guess is that most people who have fun slaving don't feel the need to see any more to it than that. But some of us become convinced by the depth of our feelings and experiences that there is more, much more, waiting there for us. And so, we turn our mind loose on the idea of slavery in the hope that we can see and understand more. And so we look again. Or, better said, to see more, we look at it differently.

When i finally became willing to look at slaving differently, something flew into my mind that i remembered from a tape recording of a lecture i heard during my college years that was given by a famous holy man who had traveled and studied in India. Back then, i knew nothing about non-Christian religions, but i tagged along with some friends who were also curious to hear the tape. Somewhere during the lecture, the holy man said something like, "The brilliant gem is already in your hand." Of course, i had looked down at my hand and saw nothing there (remember the glass of water?). But i remembered this utterance years later as i was struggling with slave issues. i turned my mind's eye inward and tried to listen with a quiet mind and i slowly began to encounter a deeper self that seemed very surrendered.

i could feel, only dimly at first, the personality of something much bigger, much more important within myself. i discovered that there was already a slave waiting there inside myself for me to meet. The emotional pain and longing i had felt earlier

was his pain at not yet having been noticed by me. Once i turned my mind's eye inside myself, rather than wasting all that time looking for a Master to make me into a slave, the pain and longing stopped. i found myself face to face with my internal slave self. For the first time, relief washed over me like warm waves of iridescent green light.

i suppose that adherents of Native American spirit traditions might say that i had met an inner spirit guide. Traditional psychiatrists could wonder about a personality fragment left over from childhood trauma. Australian Aboriginals might nod knowingly about a visitation from a clan ancestor. Jungian analysts most likely would identify this as an encounter with a part of my shadow. Leather Christians could label him as my leather guardian angel. New-Age kinky spiritual guys might say he is the spirit of one of my many fallen leather brothers.

In fact, i didn't care whether any or all of these interpretations were right or wrong. What mattered to me is that i had recognized my slave Self at last, and that i knew instinctively that he had information which i had needed for a very long time. And that he wanted me to have it.

And like all fine slaves, when i asked him questions, he gave me answers. Sometimes it took me a while to understand the answers, so i had to learn to listen to him very carefully through the nearly ever-present emotional noise, like radio static, the sort of mental interference that always seems to emanate from life, and which clutters all our minds. He is unwilling---is perhaps even unable to shout about what he knows. He has taught me that slaves do not shout unless ordered to do so by their Masters. So, i have had to learn to turn off the static of life and pay closer, quieter attention to him.

Readers will notice that i have used a literary device to make the process of my discovery easier to write about. i have been referring to a part of myself in the third person as though i

really experienced him as somehow distinct from myself. i have done this in the hope of describing the process of discovery more clearly. Perhaps an even simpler way to express it, now that i have said all the foregoing, might be to say that i reached inside myself and peeled away the outside layers of the distracting, socialized me, like one might peel an onion.

An acquaintance has suggested that this peeling away process is one of the main activities that Masters do in the development of a slave. However, i would argue that most (not all) Masters have not learned how to go about this peeling away process in anything approaching an orderly, well-thought out, or even conscious way. It feels much safer to suggest that Masters, through Their domination, provide us the opportunity to do the peeling away ourselves, that They provide the context in which it can happen. The ideal situation, it seems to me, is for both to participate via careful and honest communications in the progressive development of the slave-self.

Anyway, as the layers of my socialized self fell away, my slave self became more and more revealed. Put as simply as possible, i went inside myself and became what i already was but hadn't yet realized. In short, i got honest.

And when i did so, i realized that all efforts to understand my feelings in my earlier years had been little more than my mind's clever way of avoiding or delaying the encounter with my inner self which had been waiting there all along. While i had been pouring through my internal library trying to do research on my feelings, my slave self had been sitting, waiting under a tree with all or most of the answers i needed. All i had to do was learn to spend honest time with myself without fear, and allow myself to be guided by what i learned. Some of the learning was easy and some was not, but i will come to that later.

Part II: Seeing slavery-what it is; what it is not.

And so now it is time to reveal what i have come to discover about slavery.

Slavery is an agreement i make first with myself. i decide that decisions about my behavior will be placed under the control of someone who is worthy and who knows Himself well. i make this decision because i have learned that when someone else has control of my behavior, my mind experiences a transformation during which it is open to being flooded with an ecstatic bliss that i can't get any other way.

From that point of view, slavery is something i do for myself. It is my way of being selfish because i like feeling joyous and blissful. i think we were all born to feel bliss, and slavery is simply the way i do that. It is now, quite obviously, the very best decision i can make for myself.

Slavery is a paradox. i get what i seek by giving my obedience to another. i like to say that slaving is a choice, but at this point in my life it has become clear that there isn't really much of a choice for me at all. To breathe, i must inhale. To feel my favorite bliss, i must slave.

When a friend once mentioned that Buddha is reported to have said, "To have it all, you must first give it all up," i understood him. slaves who work to improve our submission understand this idea. Buddhism is a way to have it all that entails submission to a set of principles. Slavery is a way to have it all that entails submission to at least one individual. And the submission itself is, or can be, guided by a set of principles.

These principles can offer slaves ideas about how to give it all up and thus have it all. This same notion is partially suggested by the proverb that tells us, "It is better to give than to receive." my view is that its best to give and thereby receive.

Giving is getting. This is my best summation of what slavery and slaving is all about for me.

If it doesn't take me where i need to go, then what the hell is the point?

As for the principles themselves, i believe that when submission is guided by a set of principles, a blissful experience is much more likely to result than when submission is left unguided. The principles that i have learned will be the subjects of the remaining essays. For now, it is enough to say that i know my submission works - delivers the goods - better when it is informed by guidelines than when not.

So, slavery is a paradoxical way to generate happiness by surrendering control over one's behaviors to another. The act of my surrendering is accomplished by following certain principles and using the tools of submission implied by those principles. Understanding the principles and using the tools is the real work of slavery. Once a slave can do these things, cleaning the toilets is a piece of cake.



At this point, it will be really useful to distinguish a slave from a generic bottom or submissive.

The chief difference between them is the orientation from which each pursues his own satisfaction. Bottoms have appetites that are their own, whereas slaves' needs become the same as those of the Master.

(A bottom can sometimes be mistaken for a slave when the Master's appetites and the bottom's appetites accidentally happen to match smoothly. This can be very confusing for Masters when it happens, by the way, and is potentially danger-

ous for Them. The difficulty is hidden from both of them until the appetites of one or the other change.)

For example, a Master might like His boots licked and a bottom might like to lick boots, and so the boots get licked. But the slave need have no desire to lick boots. Instead, he wants to service the Master's desire to have His boots licked and, again, the boots get licked. The licking of both bottom and slave may look the same, but the boot lickers are coming from very different orientations.

Staying with this same example, the bottom may lose interest in licking the boots at some point and initiate some other activity or simply stop when he has had his fill. The slave will lick boots until he receives some other instruction, or until he becomes exhausted and can no longer physically lick. Both bottom and slave are selfish only in the sense that they all do what will bring themselves pleasure: the bottom gets to enjoy his interest in licking; and the slave gets the pleasure of pleasing the Master. If the slave also happens to love boot licking, then that is a bonus for the slave, but it is not his main source of pleasure. This boot licking example was chosen because it is such a commonly shared interest and illustrates the distinction, although subtly.

Bottoms and slaves are much more dramatically distinguished from each other when we imagine how each of these might respond to orders like, "Pick up my dry-cleaning this afternoon," or "Pick up the dog shit in the back yard and use your hands," or "Go outside and stand on one foot, wait for the mail delivery, and fetch the mail," or even, "We are going to look at an exhibition of toy dolls next week at the museum. Read up on dolls before then so that you can explain them to me as we look at the exhibit together."

Immediately the differences become crystal clear. To the vast majority of bottoms, such orders would be laughable. For a

slave, each of these represents an opportunity to give pleasure and find joy in surrendering to His will. Monks in many religious orders would associate this idea with their performance of menial tasks as the offering of their labor as an act of love, devotion, and the exercise of humility.

i remember a novice Top asking me during an SM scene, "Do ya wanna touch my big hard cock, boy?" i instantly felt confused. And i remember answering, "Only if that will pleasure you, Sir." It was not what He wanted to hear, and He was thrown off balance. He was dealing with me as though i was a bottom, and my slave response threw Him off. So, hopefully, we all learn together.

From another point of view, i believe that there are two general types of slavery. The first is a "conditional" slavery in which the slave surrenders himself to a Master, provided that the Master agrees to honor certain conditions which may be negotiated either prior to or during the erotic encounter----a "Scene." Examples of some of the conditions could include:

- Only in private
- Only if You wear "X".
- Only if we don't talk about it.
- Only with me as Your partner.
- Only without (or with) drugs.
- Only if You won't take photos.
- Only if You won't leave the room.
- Only if You won't tell anyone ever.
- Only if i can have a bail out option.
- Only if You promise to do "X" to me.
- Only if You promise not to do "X" to me.
- Only if You promise you won't let me cum.
- Only if You don't talk during the scene.
- Only for tonight (this weekend, this week,etc.).

Only until i cum (or, we both cum, maybe)
Only if You don't tell me about other slaves.

Although this is a very incomplete list, it does provide an idea of the range of possible conditions a person wanting to slave might need to impose on a candidate Master as a prerequisite for an encounter. Any such conditions can, of course, be modified during the Scene itself depending on how it unfolds. Among those of us with some experience, at least some of these conditions - and many others - are assumed to be in force going into a Scene unless there is specific and clear negotiation otherwise. i think it is fairly safe to say that most slaving experiences that people have are the conditional sort, whether the conditions are specifically negotiated or not.

But different slaves have different feelings about conditions such as these. Some slaves will be comforted by the Master's acceptance of these conditions and be more able to give themselves to the experience of slaving more completely and more easily. This should not be surprising because the slave's need for conditions is all about the fears that live in the slave's mind, and the agreements with the Master help make those fears go away or, at least not matter much during the Scene. In general, the slave worries that he won't have a good time without some conditions in place which will help to manage his fears. Some guys who want to slave will accept that these fears are real for them and are connected to real issues they have and, therefore, have no problem with their need for conditions.

Other slaves will look upon their own need for conditions with contempt and feel apologetic about the need for them. They might conclude that their need for conditions is evidence that their fascination with slaving is shallow and selfish, or perhaps underdeveloped.

For many of these slaves, the need for conditions feels

directly proportional to the imperfection of their slave selves. Put differently, they feel that the "better" a slave is, the fewer conditions must be imposed upon a Master in order to serve well. In simplest terms, they believe that "real" slaves have no conditions-no limits.

Although i am not sure, i suspect that a great many fantasies about slaving involve slaves with no limits, and thus, wannabe slaves get the idea that having no conditions is somehow better than having to impose conditions.

From the fantasy point of view, slaves also divide neatly into two groups: those who decide that their real experiences can't or shouldn't match their fantasy desires, and those who decide to make their real experiences come as close as possible to their fantasy desires. The first group tends to have no problem, or fewer problems, with their need for conditions, while the second group often tends to see their need for conditions as a barometer of their closeness to, or distance from, their idealized fantasy of themselves.

Given that we all come out of more or less the same culture with more or less the same values about things, including submission, it seems certain that all of us who are drawn to slaving for whatever reason, begin, and sometimes end, our journeys into slavehood as "conditional" slaves. As we go along, we learn which conditions are really necessary and which ones are only sometimes necessary. Conditions may come and go depending on our experiences, whether we repeat with a Master or not, how trustworthy we judge a Master to be, our job situation, whether we have significant relationships with others, and a host of other variables that happen in people's lives.

At this point, it is important to stop and note that whether one accepts his needs to impose conditions, or is at war inside

himself with these needs, there are great and magical experiences to be had slaving for those who desire it. For myself, some of the most memorable experiences in my slaving life have been with short-term Masters who had no difficulty with the conditions i imposed on our time together.

Those Masters understood that i was afraid of exposure, afraid of losing my job, afraid of being compared with other slaves, afraid of being injured by accident, afraid of being ordered to do things i didn't think i could do or didn't know how to do, afraid of being permanently marked in some way, afraid of many things, afraid of myself, and afraid of Them and Their appetites. And They wanted me anyway, fears and all. We had a great time together, and i learned a lot.

There is no way i can think of to know for sure how many, but i do know that a significant percentage of us who begin our explorations of slaving discover before long that slaving is somewhere at the core of our identity - that it is self-defining. For us, it becomes our overriding passion in life to the extent that nothing else matters quite as much to us. By the time i was nineteen, i knew that my destiny would one day lead me to become the treasured property of some worthy Man or Men who would use me for His (Their) own pleasure.

Once i became clear about all that, i took it upon myself to turn myself into the most interesting and skilled person i could imagine. i reasoned that a worthy owner would only be interested in owning an unusual guy with a wide range of abilities. i learned all i could about the *geisha* of feudal Japan because they were renowned as givers of pleasure. i studied the role of slaves in ancient Rome to see what that could teach me. These and many other investigations all inform my view of slavery today. But i digress.

For better or for worse, many of us who are slave-identi-

fied are guided by a beacon somewhere in our consciousness, and that beacon is the ideal of a slave with no limits whatsoever - no conditions. The more experience we have with Masters upon whom we have imposed conditions, the less we like the conditions and the less we respect ourselves for needing them.

we may spend time, sometimes lots of time, with Masters who have no trouble with our conditions. But sooner or later some of us grow to hate our conditions and the fears inside ourselves that demand them. we come to believe that a deeper slavery will deliver a deeper joy, and we equate that deeper slavery with needing fewer conditions. For those of us who are wired this way, sure enough, we discover that as we learn to eliminate our fears and the conditions that result from them, the bliss of surrender grows and grows.

we begin to search for a Master with whom we can let go of our need for conditions.

A "no limits" or unconditional slave is something i've never seen outside the context of a given relationship, at least not yet. To get there, one must arrive at a place in his head where he is unwilling to say "no" to anything any Master might want from him.

Having said that, it may be possible for a slave to reach a "no limits" situation within the context of a given relationship with a particular Master, provided the Master does not want or need the slave to do those things that are on the slaves list of "hard" limits. For an extreme example just to make the point, if a slave won't tolerate erotic contact with animals, and the Master whom that slave is with has no interest in exposing the slave to animals in an erotic way, then that limit to that slave has become irrelevant in the context of dealing with that particular Master. In short, a slave can be a no limits slave with a particular Master, and this situation does happen. So, a slave might be able to say, "i have no limits with this Master" and be telling the truth.

Part III: Beyond Slavery; The Great Deep and the Roaring Void

When a slave is fortunate enough to get connected to a Master who enjoys, or wants to enjoy, having a slave who aspires to a condition-free relationship, as they spend more and more time together, some amazing things begin to happen. As our slaving conditions begin to fall away and our surrender deepens, the feeling of being connected to our Master expands. Once it has expanded sufficiently, slaves fall in love with the Master - we cannot do otherwise - it just happens. At that point, the Master becomes our lifeline and our dependence on Him becomes manifest. By then, we have placed our lives in His hands many times and we get to a place in our heads where we long to deny Him nothing - nothing at all.

my own experience of this feeling is that He is like the Captain of a ship, sailing over the deepest part of the Sea of Surrender and i am His crewman. When we are together and He wants to enjoy me, it is as though He orders me over the side and down into the "water." i breathe from a long tube or hose through which He pumps air and warmth to me. If at any moment i feel that He is withdrawing from me emotionally for any reason, then i will begin to drift upward, toward the surface. i will "come shallow" as submariners like to call it.

The more He demands from me, the deeper down into the Sea of Surrender i drift. If He should push the limits of my current capabilities, my descent stops at that point, and i remain suspended at that depth. But if He continues to push me, i take that as a sign that He wants me to go deeper and i use my internal slave tools to dissolve my resistance and continue my descent. If He continues, before long, i shall find myself slowly settling to the very bottom of the Sea of Surrender, a place i have

come to call The Great Deep.

At these times, my breathing and heart rate often becomes slowed. Sometimes, i cannot see with my eyes, even though they may be wide-open in a lighted place. my sense of my body can also change, sometimes very radically. As long as He continues with whatever He is doing right then, and does not reduce the intensity of whatever Scene is happening, and doesn't say much, or demand that i speak to Him, i can remain in the slightly inert physical, yet very alert mental state i have just described.

my internal experience at such times is one of a limitless, resonant joy enveloping me, sometimes quietly, other times vibrantly. All words, all thoughts, are swept away, and i am so very peaceful inside. And, in the distance, i can sometimes hear the deep, low-pitched, undulating sounds of what a slave buddy of mine calls, The Roaring Void. (The alert reader will recognize that this is the desired state of being found in certain spiritual disciplines.)

From beyond that place, i can sometimes use abilities that i won't describe because your credibility will snap if i try. Those who have been there will understand, and those who haven't simply cannot.

This then, is much of what i have come to understand about slavery. There are other things, but they are unusual exceptions or amplifications of things i have already said.

Essay 4

The Principle of "Identity"

As promised, with this fourth essay, i shall begin to detail the principles which i continually use to refine and develop my efforts to serve. i use them because it is my most ardent hope that by doing so, the Master in whose home i am currently permitted to live and serve will have a life that is ever more pleasing to Him. It is in His pleasure that i find my happiness. In the previous essay, i discussed the fact that, for me, the joy in my life is directly proportional to my skill and eagerness at denying Him no pleasures that are within my capacity to provide.

If i were to be given the fabled three wishes by a genie, the first would be to become a genie myself. i would have no need for the remaining two wishes.

In time, i've come to believe that, with slavery, just as with any mountain, there are many ways to get to the summit, but once there, the view is the same, no matter which route was chosen. Even so, the slave side of the mountain is one that i spent years and tears trying to scale. All the routes that looked easy were not, and when i chose them, i failed in one way or another. After sustaining injuries, both emotional and otherwise, i decided that the routes that looked easy were just an illusion and, therefore, not to be trusted.

Sometimes, i chose a Master as a climbing partner, believing that all i had to do was follow Him to the summit. The second essay discussed at length what i learned by falling prey to the myth of slave training-that the vast majority of Masters know next to nothing about scaling the slave side of the mountain. How could they? They are Masters, and therefore, practically speak-

ing, a different species with almost completely different goals. Their path to the summit is found on the Master side of the mountain.

Again, for climbing mountains with difficult routes to the summit, no matter which way is chosen, climbers use a broad skill-set to succeed - so too with slavery.

Put differently, different slaves will encounter different sets of challenges with consensual slavery depending on who and how they are as people, and what kinds of Masters they encounter. One climber might be riddled with shame about his passionate desire to slave. Another might not know how to bend a strong will to the will of a Master. Another may find dealing with physical and/or emotional pain no problem at all. Still others may lose track of their slave selves and drift back into self-centered motives.

At one time or another, i have stumbled with all of these obstacles, and others as well. i still do stumble at times, although less and less frequently, because i try to be guided by the principles that follow. Stumbling is not a bad thing because it teaches where improvement is needed. Our failures in slavery are better viewed as indications of where more work needs to be done. They are useful for both Masters and slaves because they reveal our weaknesses and can help us grow into a deeper submission. Our "failures" define our growing edge.

Like all consensual slaves, i am a work in progress; always pressing on towards perfection with no thought of ever achieving it. Good Masters are a dynamic bunch and so, They grow, evolve and develop as people. When that happens, the definition of slave perfection shifts as They shift. For that reason, the notion of a "complete" or "finished" slave is temporary and illusory, and so must be viewed with suspicion. The tools offered here are the ones that i use to reinforce and renew my slavery so that i can adjust myself easier and faster to the course changes He

makes in His life.

When Masters also happen to do SM, much of Their work has to do with learning the technical skills of that craft based on what turns Them on. The technical skills are much easier for Them to acquire, of course. From the technique point of view, much of the work of being a Top and/or Master "shows" in that we can see Their efforts at a bondage setup for example, or a complicated electrical or needle scene. And yes, They do sometimes have a lot of technical details to manage - no argument there. Master-work can usually be seen with the naked eye, that is, if we are not blindfolded at the moment.

Their other work consists of learning how to support slaves through and past our internal resistance mechanisms in a way that binds us closer to Them and continually enhances our value to Them while strengthening our trust and surrender. It is unfortunate that up to now at least, there is very little truly useful information about these "deep" skills of Mastery for Those wishing to learn more. With luck, that may someday change. Mister Califia's afterword at the end of this book is a truly valuable contribution to Master development, of course, but so much more is needed that can only come from Their own ranks.

i sometimes hear Tops and Masters complain about how much work it is to do Their thing. Occasionally, the implication is that we slaves don't have any work to do apart from accepting whatever They do and following orders - that being a bottom and/or slave is all about being passive for the most part.

The work of slavery, however, does not "show" for the most part because it happens in our minds, our hearts, our guts. Masters don't usually recognize that we are working at surrender because They don't really know what our "working" looks like. For example, when a Master hears a slave say something like, "Bullwhips always make me nervous," that Master is witnessing

the slave starting to work. The slave is running into his internal opposition to, or fear of, the whip. It is not a refusal; by reporting this fact, he is hoping for help to move past it.

Doing the work of slavery is not initially very evident from the outside. It must first be done internally. Only when the work of slavery is first done inside the slave's mind can it ever be witnessed externally when a slave is observed serving a Master. For me, and i suspect many others who are finding joy in slavery, the external action was preceded by the internal work of self-acceptance. And part of the effort is in developing an understanding of whatever principles slaves use to guide the process of their surrender, and a working knowledge of the tools implied by those principles.

The good news is that some, or much, or even most of the internal work of consensual slavery can be fun if the slave allows it to be so. Some will find the work, or parts of the work, more difficult than others. my task here is to be as clear and complete as i can about the principles and their tools as i have come to know them thus far. For some of you, i will probably say too much about some parts of the work, and not say enough for others, and for that, i am sorry.

Other slaves may use different principles and tools, or they may use some of those that will be discussed here, but call them by different names. Part, or all, of what follows may be consciously understood by a slave, or it may all be intuitive, as is often the case with what i have earlier called "naturals." This and the remaining essays will reveal and discuss the principles and tools i use almost daily.

But first, i need to say some things about tools themselves. The nature of tool usage - any tool - is always dualistic. You already know this. A hammer can be used to build something or tear it down, as you choose. This is the same for a saw, computer, bulldozer, laser, whip, or whatever. Tools have no power,

in and of themselves, but they do change power in some way or other. People use power through tools to change something - to transform - to create or destroy, or, more rarely, to prevent change. (And there are delicious paradoxes here worth turning aside to note, but not explore too deeply. Sometimes we destroy as we create and create as we destroy, and in this, we can find the sublime unity of polar opposites, which is sweet to contemplate, but better left for another time - another conversation.)

Power modified by tools accomplishes the tasks one selects. Anything powerful can create as well as destroy in equal proportion, depending on how, why, and in what spirit the power is used (a Taoist notion). So, nuclear power can create as well as destroy depending on the tools we fashion to change how we use such power, for example. Thus, we get cancer fighting nuclear isotopes, or we get bombs. Love is powerful. It can be used to destroy or to create. Television is a tool - useful for creative pursuits, useful for destructive ones, and so on.

Submission itself can be an amazing tool. Surrender to pleasure, love, truth, service, intimacy - these possess greater potential to produce a creative result. If you surrender to anger, guilt, shame, or fear - either yours or someone else's - you risk your destruction at worst, or delay at best. It is my belief that you can afford neither because, again.....*Wasted Time is Wasted Passion.*

i recommend that you be watchful to discern creative from destructive results before you pick up either the submission tool, or the tools of submission for serious exploration (or the tools of domination, for that matter.) Once you have these tools in your hands . . . well, sometimes it can be too late, or the situation too complicated to learn those differences right then. To learn these important differences, we must first be able to establish and maintain contact with our true feelings - not thoughts,

not the feelings of others rattling around in our heads, not the echoes of society, not those over-amplified by drugs, not the hopes and dreams of our parents, but our true feelings.

And lastly, i want to suggest ways for you to think about the principles and tools that follow. As i said in the last essay, how you look at a thing often determines what you can see and how you respond to what you see. i will soon present some thoughts about the first of the four cornerstone principles and the tools that are associated with them. One of these principles must be first, and one of the others will have to come last because i can only present them here in a linear format - in words.

But it will probably not be useful for you to think of these in any particular order, or assign any more importance to one than to another. Better to imagine them as equally powerful tools in a toolbox. Pull them out and apply them to obstacles as you encounter them, just as any mountain climber might during the ascent.

Or, if you need a different metaphor, think of the Principles as mermen who live and frolic in the Sea of Surrender which i mentioned in the last essay. As you encounter difficulties, take yourself to the shore of your mind and invite one of the mermen to surface and sing his song to you about the principle that will help you the most, right then. But please try to remember this: they sing softly, so you must listen with a quiet mind and an open heart, lest their song be wasted on you and allow your difficulty of the moment to persist. If you don't know how to quiet your mind, you can start by learning to use a formal meditation technique to do so. Several have helped me more than i have the space here to tell you about.

The Principle of Identity

Ideally, a slave is a person who always knows who and what he is - a slave first, and anyone or anything else second. When i am managing a complicated occupation, i am a slave and doing so at the order of the Master. At His order, i would quit in a heartbeat. When i write, i do so at His order and with His permission. These words only find their way out of my slave soul and on to paper when He has no better use for me. He is sleeping right now, and would rather have me here writing than cleaning His boots (done earlier tonight), or His bathroom (done last night) or perhaps even something more sexual.

Whenever the slave identity begins to feel distant from me for whatever reason - maybe i'm tired, maybe He doesn't want anything from me right then, maybe we're watching television--*identity drift* can sometimes creep over me. By that, i mean that sometimes slaves can drift away from our slave identity.

Sometimes, He notices it drifting when we are together and then He has a choice. He can either do something that re-centers me in my slave identity, or He can ignore it and wait for me to notice it and correct the drift myself. He makes His choice according to His whim, of course. He is the Master and is often driven by His whims. Sometimes, He will observe how long it takes me to notice the drift myself, and how long it takes me to correct it. Because it matters to Him.

From my point of view, He has been generous enough to have given me some symbols that help keep me centered, such as His chains locked around my neck at all times. One chain is of a smaller gauge for work days (49 links) and the other is a larger, heavier one for other times (20 links). The locks are different, too. i cherish the chains and fear the locks because they mean that one day i might be set free, and being Masterless defines hell on earth for me. From His point of view, the collars are a turn-on for Him and not a generosity at all, but a selfishness. i like it when

He is selfish.

Except for an occasional medical procedure or international border crossing, there has never been a moment since i committed to His pleasure and service that one or the other of His chain collars has not been around my neck for me to touch. When He swaps them, one goes on before the other comes off.

For me, the links of the chains are like a rosary or like prayer wheels in a Buddhist temple. i touch them when i drift. (Other times too, of course.) The touch can bring me back to my slave self, my identity. He does not yet know that i know how many links there are in His collars. At least He has never asked if i know. He probably doesn't know or care how many links there are. i care. my slavery means things to me it doesn't mean to Him. We are different species. He will discover that i know about the links when He reads this, maybe tomorrow, maybe some other day, whenever He chooses. i think He will smile when He reads this.

He usually keeps me naked in His presence, temperature and privacy permitting. i wear a pager out in the abnormal world. It is His electronic leash. It means that i am only as far away from His voice and His will as the nearest phone. The hair on my body below the neck offends Him, so i remove it whenever it becomes visible, and He removes it from where i can't reach. With each stroke of the razor - His strokes or mine - i remind myself that i am His. And whether it's with razor strokes or whip strokes, each feels different, but the meaning is the same.

Perhaps one day He will order me completely hairless, i don't know. But if doing so pleases Him, then i will be pleased. my body and everything to do with it is at His disposal and neither of us would have it otherwise. We know who we are. When my slave identity is focused and centered, i know who and what i am.

This is not pornography. This is my identity. Yet, it is

sometimes so sexy that it shakes me to the bone. That is just another bonus.

But we are not always together. He works and wants me to work for now. Sometimes i catch myself drifting when we are apart. And if the drift is more serious than touching His collar around my neck will correct, then i must use stronger, more articulate tools to become re-centered.



In all traditions that i know about which have internal transformation as their goal, there are Verbal Rituals that are designed to re-focus the individual on his goal of transformation. Many of the various martial arts disciplines employ ritualized vocalizations to help focus both the student and the adept. Australian Aborigines sing special songs to connect them to their ancestors and clan totems and facilitate transformation. The Pledge of Allegiance and the Happy Birthday song have the same purposes, but accomplish different kinds of transformations. One transforms us by stirring feelings of patriotism, and the other by stirring feelings of affection and good will.

The Amida assassins of feudal Japan yelled, "*Namu Amida Butsu!*" just before taking their own lives if they failed to make a kill. This invocation re-centered them, transformed them, and gave them courage to make the final cut. If my memory and information are correct, none were ever taken alive. U.S. Marines learn numerous verbal rituals designed to focus the minds of young "boots" on the collective identity of The Corps, often "chanted" when marching. Russian Orthodox choirs, Alcoholics Anonymous, monks in most monasteries, the Boy Scouts, many Japanese industrial workers, The West Hollywood Cheerleaders, and The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence all employ the power of verbal ritual to facilitate personal, internal transformation.

All these people use such rituals because they work. i use them, too. And so can you, to re-focus your slave identity when it drifts. And until we have communities that are composed of Masters and Their slaves, the rituals to correct drifting must be used in solitude.

Protecting, preserving, and refining my slave identity is so important to me that i will use any tool and any method available to me to keep myself focused at all times. To get back to my slave center, if necessary, i would board the space shuttle, ride there on the back of an alligator, or in a chariot drawn by a team of termites. But, faster is better.

So i use this:

The First Dialogue

"What are you?"

"i am a pilgrim-a kind of seeker."

"And what is it that you seek?"

"i seek fulfillment, the goal to which all other goals must eventually lead."

"And which of the paths to fulfillment have you selected?"

"It is the path that selects the pilgrim."

"Well then, which?"

"The path of joyous surrender, ecstatic suffering, and selfless service has chosen me, and at length, i have yielded to its call."

"How did you come to know this path had chosen you?"

"In surrender, suffering, and service, i can feel light streaming into my life-my soul; away from these, i feel only despair and longing for It."

"If this is so, what delayed your yielding to their call?"

"First, so few are called to this path, and then,

only singly and privately. At first, i was afraid there were no others like me. Second, we are ridiculed and otherwise abused by those who do not understand us. i feared such ridicule. Third, although we can usually make our preparations for the journey without a Counterpart, none of us can make the journey itself without One, and in this, i feared greatly that i might not find the right One."

"A Counterpart?"

"Yes, a joyous Master-an ecstatic Sadist must be chosen for the journey, for it is the paradox of these paths that one of us may not travel without the other."

"So you're both on the same path together?"

"No, these two paths are parallel and sometimes, quite close together - often touching."

"Interesting. Is there more?"

"There is always more."

The first dialogue ends here.

And the short form:

"What are you?"

"i am a seeker."

The recitation of this and other verbal rites, these mantras, these prayers, if you like, are some of my most powerful tools. To use them, one must first quiet the mind and then speak the ritual, either silently or aloud, but clearly into your heart. Make emotional contact with the meaning and the spirit of the words. Concentrate on the repetitions until you do make emo-

tional contact. If it does not re-center you, choose another and proceed as above. If it still won't take you home to your slave self, then that means you haven't followed the above recipe carefully. These will work if you work them.

Be advised, however, that they will not work until you know that slavery is your best possible destiny.

But such tools are useless if they go unused. If you crave slavery as i do, you must keep yourself centered on your quest for the sublime bliss of surrender. Don't expect Masters to do it for you unless you just happen to find One whose appetite for keeping you centered and focused exactly matches your own rate of identity drift. If you wait for that One, you could wait forever, and, as i have said twice earlier.....Wasted Time is Wasted Passion."

One time, at a dungeon event, i went off to sleep to the distant sounds of a friend who was screaming his wild, out-of-control screams under the assault of his Master's bullwhip. Sometimes i recall those sounds and they, too, have become a powerful sonic ritual. Or i may recall the sight of his beautiful, scabby back the next morning, and that vision will re-center me. Such re-centering tools can be verbal, sonic, visual, or a movement - like the touching of the Master's collar-or even a remembered smell like the one inside His boots. i can close my eyes at any time and place, inhale deeply, recall the way His boots smell when i stick my face inside one of them, and sail right home to my slave center. Use what works. But they must be repeated at least once, like a chant, to get the job done.

The prime directive of the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood of Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965) was, "We exist only to serve." Try that one if you like. Or, best of all, invite one of the mermen who live and frolic in the Sea of Surrender to surface and guide you as you create your own songs of submission. When you sing it, say it, see it, do it, smell it, taste it, or touch it, it will help you to re-

focus. If it does not, find a different song. The right one is there, waiting to be discovered inside yourself if you will only make yourself listen carefully.

Essay 5

The Principle of Obedience

"Blessed is the slave whom his master, returning, finds performing his duty."

--Jesus Christ according to Matthew XXIV, 46

After the principle of Identity, nothing is more important to the creation and maintenance of consensual slavery than the principle of Obedience. Put simply, once we accept, embrace, and validate what we know we are inside as slaves, the next part is to learn how to actually be what we know we are. Since slaves do what Masters want us to do, we must first become accomplished at obedience itself to honor our calling as slaves. It is simple enough to say....in fact, it rolls easily off the tongue: "Become accomplished at obedience itself...."

But becoming accomplished at obedience resembles becoming accomplished at painting - applying colored liquids to a surface to create a desired result. After all, anyone can paint, and most of us have done so: a child finger paints; a friend paints his living room; the student paints a street scene in Paris; and Michelangelo paints the Sistine chapel and summarizes the Christian experience in a single room. We could call all of these accomplished, but our meaning would be different in each case. Likewise, anyone can obey and everyone has, does, and will do so again until death overtakes us one day. But again, the meanings are different, just as with the painters. And it is the purpose, context, and the result that make that difference in meaning.

When it comes to the obedience of those who are slaving, the meaning of "becoming accomplished at obedience" might change, depending on who we are serving and why, how long the submission will last, what is demanded of us, and our

previous experience with the demands placed upon us. Or the meaning might change depending on how much time has passed since we last slaved, whether we've had prior good experience with slaving, our physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional resources, general life circumstances, and many other factors. my point is that our obedience does not exist in a vacuum - it must have a context.

But in the context of serving the One we have chosen to give ourselves to - of serving The Master, our obedience can eventually become independent of all, or almost all, of these other things. i think it is safe to say that the usual goal for slaves who have given themselves to Him is that our obedience becomes absolute, automatic, instinctive, and immediate, given the limitations of our bodies.

For slaves, our obedience determines what can be enjoyed. It determines our self-esteem and pleasure. It connects us. It gives us purpose. It protects us. It validates us. i have come to believe that obedience is the very spirit of slavery; it is the special charisma of slave creatures. Obedience is the structural steel of our slave identity, and the spine of a slave's conviction. Obedience alone determines what is right and what is wrong. It frees a slave to be what only a slave can be - one whose will has been replaced by that of another. Obedience is usually the single most important concern of a slave, and this frees us from almost all other concerns. It is the overarching principle through which right and wrong is assessed by us, and by Those we serve.

The slave asks himself only, "Did i obey?" If the answer is "yes", then he did everything he could or should do. If the answer is no, then, at best, he did nothing worth noting. At worst, he was disobedient and perhaps even insolent. After a slave's conditions have been articulated and he has chosen to give himself over to the Master, if a slave thinks about the impact or consequence of what he does, he is thinking about something that is none of his business - these are the Master's business. If a slave's

obedience results in the Master's displeasure, that is also the Master's business, so long as the slave obeyed, that is all that matters. When "in service," a slave spends his time only determining if he obeyed or not. If the slave obeyed, then the Master can praise, criticize, punish, ignore, or whatever, and His reaction can be accepted and enjoyed, *if the slave obeyed!* Obedience is freedom for slaves. Another paradox. Who knew? we do.

The slave in perfect obedience neither offers nor reserves anything. His only obligation, his concern, his evaluation criteria, his only question, his only satisfaction is from determining if he obeyed.

There is perhaps no responsibility more ominous or profound than that of owning another man. The disturbances that can result from a slave exercising any unordered judgement outside the realm of obedience can call into question the Master's competence both with Himself and with the slave. Unfortunately, most Masters are simply not capable of, or prepared to, interpret what is going on in any other way. (Please read that again.)

It seems probable that one of several essential traits that makes a man a good and successful Master is the ability to maintain a fairly narrow focus on the condition of His slave's obedience. This gives Him the freedom to do what He pleases with the benchmark of success being the improvement of the slave and their time together. All too often, when Masters sense any behavior that shows failure in either Themselves or Their slaves, it activates Their internal sentry, and causes Them to question the health of the relationship. Ideally, this questioning results in a careful and balanced review of what is going on.

Furthermore, when a slave begins to operate too much on his own without instruction to do so, to entertain questions or to engage in significant behaviors outside the realm of obedience, the Master may not be able to protect his slave. It is only the slave's obedience that enables a Master to control and, therefore

protect, a slave against the most damaging threat possible, the slave's thoughts. A Master needs only His common sense to protect against the physical dangers, but the emotional dangers within the slave's mind are the ones that can seriously challenge the Master's authority and, therefore, the relationship itself.

Absolute consensual slavery can only be made manifest in absolute and voluntary obedience. (Conversely, non-consensual slavery can only be made manifest with control through involuntary confinement and physical and/or mental coercion - not what this book is dealing with.)

Only a partial or conditional slavery is made manifest to the extent that obedience is planned, and yes, even felt. As would-be slaves come to understand the true nature of obedience, we learn the true nature of consensual slavery, of slaving, of slave-ness. When obedience becomes automatic, instantaneous, complete, and unconscious, then absolute consensual slavery can begin to emerge in us.

Any process of thinking that is practiced during the development of this kind of slavery must lead to less and less thought process. It is misguided to proceed toward one's slavery with the belief that through more and more sophisticated thinking, a slave will be able to get better and better. The opposite is true. A slave grows as the thinking alternatives diminish - until only the thought, the act, of obedience itself, remains. The Principles articulated in this series of essays are designed to help move the slave mind progressively in that direction, toward that goal.

Some of the best highs of slavery occur when we are pushed out into the unknown by our Masters. There, only our obedience can sustain us. Any thought that arises outside of obedience risks our undoing. By the time the thinking slave figures out which thought should be exercised in this new circumstance, and what is expected of him, and what will please his Master, and

what is acceptable, and what will make him look like he did right, and what will make the best impression, it is too late. The experience is lost; the opportunity for the deepest bliss of surrender has passed us by. When slaves develop a deep habit of entertaining those kinds of thoughts, most of us can't learn to turn them off selectively; our chance for true submission evaporates.²

And so, Obedience is the destination. All the foregoing, and all that follows are merely intended to indicate one route to that destination, but they should not be confused with the destination itself.

To get the most out of it, obedience must be more than just following orders to the letter. Or, at least it can be more, depending on the spirit in which the slave executes the Master's order. Implied here is that your experience with obedience can also be less, or be diminished according to the spirit in which you obey. When a slave follows orders with grudging resentment, his mood will soon spiral downward into the depths of despair and depression; this will remind him of how he felt when he was without a Master. Those slaves who want to feel joy and bliss in surrender will have to obey in a particular way - in a particular spirit to optimize their experience of obedience.

Obedience can become much more than just following orders when a slave comes to understand that a Master's order is an opportunity to demonstrate to Him the sincerity of the slave's craving for surrender; that it is his privilege to bring the Master pleasure by obedience. In submission to his Master's will is the slave's only hope for finding true bliss (chocolate, of course, is an exception....just kidding). Each order is his chance to show gratitude for His attention, and the slave's respect and/or love for Him at that moment.

2. my thanks go to Mike McDade for his comments and review of the eight preceding paragraphs

One of my slave brothers tells the story of a time at the beach with his Master. The slave's Master enjoys doing rope bondage and happened to notice a piece of interesting rope that was partially buried in the sand near them. He ordered His slave to dig it from the sand, and so, the digging began. The slave tells me that the rope turned out to be long and buried deep, so the project developed into a bigger one than first met the eye. As the digging dragged on, the slave began to get frustrated and bored with the digging, and then angry when it appeared that the rope was tangled into a piece of sail buried even deeper. The Master stood over the slave and watched in silent detachment.

Frustrated and angry at last, the slave dug more furiously, hoping to bring the project to a speedy end. Finally, nearing exhaustion, his hands sore from the abrasion of the sand, the slave realized that the digging itself was what mattered to the Master - that the slave's obedience was more important than whether the rope was freed from the sand or not.

The slave explained to me that as the implications of this realization began to sink in to his slave mind, a quiet calm filled him, and the frustration and anger melted away into the sand as though they were just so much seawater vanishing into the sand. And into this calm flooded a great joy. As he grew more joyous, a new earnestness took over the digging process because the implications of the task had become more clear. i never did learn whether the rope was ever finally freed, and that doesn't really matter. But on that day some important slave development took place, because he came to understand the gift that his obedience could be, first to the Master, and through His pleasure, then for the slave as well.

When a slave's orientation toward obedience has developed this particular clarity on the nature, meaning, value, and opportunity that obedience can be, then obeying an order takes on a whole new meaning.

From this point of view, a Master who wants nothing

from us in terms of service withholds the gifts that obedience can offer to both people. On the other hand, the more demanding a Master happens to be, then the more chances there are to be nourished by the acts of obedience themselves. i suspect this may be the reason that one will sometimes encounter slaves in search of a "demanding" Master. The slaves use the demands to remain centered on their slave identities, and it is likely that they've intuited that a Master's demands can help with their need for frequent re-centering, and also be fulfilling.

Masters don't generally sit around saying to Themselves, "Hmmm....My slave needs a spiritual experience of his servitude, so that means I should have him clean the bathroom." They more likely just want the damn toilet cleaned and don't want to do it Themselves, and why should They unless it brings Them pleasure? The Master where i live and serve finds that doing the laundry is relaxing and therapeutic for Him, so He insists on doing it Himself; the privilege of doing the laundry is denied to me - His call, of course. He also enjoys doing His own auto care, including pumping the gas while i sit in the car. At those times, if i start feeling guilty and useless, i just remind myself that the pleasure He takes in doing those things for Himself must come first. When i recognize this priority clearly, then i obey Him by just sitting calmly in the car, doing nothing.

Fortunately, there are many other tasks from which He takes no pleasure; lawn and garden care, for example, hold no fascination for Him, but He does enjoy seeing the results of my labor there. Masters don't usually care whether or not slaves can alter our consciousness by cleaning toilets. Fortunately for slaves, we get to do that and get high off the obedience, whether it matters to Masters or not.

Masters take pleasure in the service of slaves. Yet, They also can sometimes take pleasure in the struggles that slaves

experience in our efforts to follow Their orders. The rope in the sand story above turned out to be just such a situation. i have come to call this type of pleasure The Pleasure of our Predicament. It either case, it becomes the slave's obligation to himself to bend his total resourcefulness to the task of compliance once an order has been issued.

When the Master in whose home i am currently permitted to serve and live wants His boots cleaned, i owe it to Him and to my slave identity to do the best possible job. When i feel i have obeyed His wish, i present the cleaned boots to Him. He then has the opportunity to place me in a predicament in case He might enjoy doing that. His whim will determine what he does next. He could order the boots cleaned again, or made dirty again, for that matter.

Easy-to-please Masters won't generally want cleaned boots fussed with any more, but will move on to Their next wish if there is one. Hard-to-please Masters may be genuinely picky or simply enjoy the predicament They may place us in by criticizing our work and ordering it re-done. Some Masters enjoy the mental stress that the predicament generates in the slave. This is emotional sadism, and some Masters find great pleasure in it. Most of the time this is referred to as a "mind fuck" or "fucking with your head."

slaves in such situations will fall into mental quicksand if they always interpret a Master's continued demands for perfection as an indication of His genuine dissatisfaction. (Remember: slaves do not interpret, we obey.) If He says He is dissatisfied, that might be the truth, or it might be a predicament type of mental scene. Masters will sometimes lie when They play with us just because it suits them to do so. To do so is a Master's prerogative. His later behavior will reveal the truth about whether He was really satisfied or not. i just try to do my best work and wait to see how things will turn out.

But slaves who are deeply into their surrender and who

are obedient to THE Master, are often more difficult to put into such mental predicaments, because when we understand obedience more clearly, we realize that the emotional pain of the predicament is the Master's objective, not the completion of the impossible task(s).

All of the above remarks about obedience make some assumptions about the Master's motives for His orders. And the assumptions are important ones, especially in the early stages of establishing a meaningful connection with a Master. One of the first general guidelines that seems to govern the behavior of most competent Masters during the opening stages with a slave, or a candidate slave, is usually something like: "The Master may not injure a slave or, through inaction, allow a slave to come to unwanted harm."³

Wise Masters who are serious about the Master/slave connection will generally try to do Their best to support the development of the candidate relationship to determine its real potential. They will have learned through previous experience that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to accurately assess a candidate slave's potential until a level of trust is first established. Without such trust, it will simply not be possible to proceed with explorations. In the early stages, it usually becomes important to Masters that They somehow make it clear to the candidate slave that he is safe enough to reveal himself and his capacity for surrender.

But for a slave who is not yet fully owned, the prime directive is Protect The Property. In other words, the slave must protect himself.

slaves worth having will not usually surrender to any interesting extent until the slave first feels that it is safe to do so.

3. my thanks go to Bjorn Palmen, nuclear physicist in Helsingfors, Finland, for this quote.

If a prospective Master's first order is for the candidate slave to run naked through the streets, and He really means it, then it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the candidate slave to take such a Master seriously - it is not safe for him to do so. A slave must come to trust that his submission will add to both their lives rather than diminish the lives of either Master or slave. Arrest and imprisonment by the authorities for lewd conduct tends to diminish people's lives. Until candidate slaves satisfy themselves on this point about prospective Masters, the slaves are best advised to withhold submission involving any such risks.

In functional Master/slave relationships, Masters must win the submission They desire and enjoy, and this is one way They do that. Before Masters receive our absolute obedience, They must demonstrate that They can be trusted with such an awesome power. They must first demonstrate that Their appetites for both control and responsibility are in balance. Until Masters do this, the most They can expect from us is a highly conditional slavery with a very negotiated submission. This is usually a less than satisfactory outcome for both.

Struggles with Obedience

There are still some times when obeying an order feels like i am being ordered into drudgery. This happens at times when my slave identity has drifted off center and/or when i forget all the above realities about obedience. i can tell when this has happened because feelings of resentment or a declining mood happen in my mind. After occasionally struggling with feelings like these when slaving, i finally began to realize that these types of feelings were really an alarm bell. Such feelings indicate that i have gotten off center from slaving and its role in my life. (i had already ruled out the possibility that He was merely abusive.)

Masters usually don't discover that such feelings are happening in slaves' heads because most inexperienced slaves are

afraid to report them to Masters. Some of us fear that those feelings will be misunderstood to mean that we aren't really slaves at all, or that we think the Master's orders are stupid and that, therefore, He is stupid. Others fear punishment. And still others fear that such feelings really do mean that we aren't good at slavery even though we want to be. And there are other fears that can silence us, too.

Depending on whether a given slave with these feelings is or is not a skilled actor, the Master may notice that our performance of the assigned task is not enthusiastic enough to suit His taste. If They do notice that we're not doing whatever very well, Masters generally have one of these responses:

1. They may ignore or criticize our efforts.
2. They may issue corrective orders that clarify how They want something done.
3. They may become discouraged by our performance and wonder if maybe They are with the wrong slave.
4. They may tease us about our performance, which is usually an indication that They are annoyed at some level.

But whichever of these They choose, They almost never know what to do about correcting our feelings.

This fact is not a criticism of Masters, it is merely a description for most of Them, and one that clearly distinguishes Master brain-wiring from slave brain-wiring. Most Masters just don't know what makes the slave mind tick. So, slaves usually have to fix these internal problems by ourselves in almost all situations where they come up. Yes, it is true that there are a few Masters out there who really understand how the slave mind works, probably because They have made understanding slave-brains into Their hobby, but these Masters are not common.

"There is nothing worse than a Master who won't deal with reality."

-Race Bannon

Those Masters who do have a clue about how slave-minds tend to function, and who want to participate in the correction of these feelings directly, will sometimes decide to intervene personally. The most usual way that this happens is that after They detect a problem, They stop whatever is happening, bring the slave near to Them, and begin to engage the slave in what i call "deep talk." In deep talk, Masters engage with the slave on a feeling level and extract from the slave some reports on the slave's internal, emotional happenings.

Once the Master has extracted a full report, He can then begin the process of problem-solving, or He might think about it while determining the best course of action. Sometimes, He discovers that a simple misunderstanding of words has caused the stress. Sometimes He discovers that the slave's emotional distress is related to external factors or something that happened in the past, or that the slave is concerned about in the future. But whatever He discovers, the Master takes whatever corrective action He is most comfortable with. This can include just listening; reminding the slave of his role, identity, and cravings; punishing; a change in orders; providing the slave with additional information; or it can include emotional self-disclosure from the Master.

Moving successfully together through such moments is perhaps the most powerful way that Masters bind us to Them because we feel so cared for when They engage us in this process. This is true whether it happens in a one-and-only-night-

together situation, on the fifth date, during a courtship, or in a long-term relationship. Such problem-solving moments in any kind of a relationship form the basis for the development of real intimacy. It is my view that unless real intimacy develops in Master/slave connections, truly deep submission becomes impossible for the slave, and deeper Mastery also eludes the Dominant.

i believe that the most magical unions between Master and slave can only happen when deep connections are forged, when we are willing and able to engage with each other at the feeling level.

It is axiomatic that the actual Content of what we talk about is much less important than is the Process of the disclosure and resolution. Progressively successful resolutions of this sort forge the strong bonds between Master and slave that can result in the development of astounding and powerful closeness, and the deepest love that i have ever known. Doing this is definitely worth the time, effort, pain, and fear that such problem solving sometimes entails for both. Masters and slaves who are unwilling to do this together turn their backs on an opportunity that few people ever get.

Admittedly, i am an incurable romantic, and i confess that these opinions reflect my own romantic biases about these things, but i've talked to a great number of Masters and slaves about this topic, and my conclusions seem well-supported by the experience of others. i am not saying that the development of intimacy through such problem-solving always results in mutual love, merely that without deeper intimacy, it isn't nearly as easy for most slaves to get to the deeper regions of surrender via obedience.

When i have been able to notice the kinds of difficult feelings i've been talking about - and i have to notice them before i can do anything about them - i have worked hard to train myself to initiate corrective action. Since i sometimes have a hard time

knowing exactly what to pin my difficulty with obedience on, i try to cover all the bases. First, i take myself through the dialogues and litanies i described in the last essay that i already know help me to get my slave identity back on center. i recite the memorized dialogues to myself or out loud, i stick my face into one of His boots, either literally or mentally, and inhale deeply, or i do the other things i talked about before. This always refreshes me, whether my mood is dumpy about obedience or not.

Next, i remind myself of all the things i discussed earlier about obedience-that my labor is an opportunity to meditate on selflessness, and all the rest. And i use the ritualized vocalization process that i introduced earlier.

The Second Dialogue

"What are you doing?"

"i am at work."

"And why are you working?"

"i work because there is joy to be found in my labor."

"And how do you find it?"

"i find joy by reminding myself that my labor pleasures the Master, and that obedience is a cornerstone of my identity."

"And why is that important?"

"It is important because when He is pleased, i am at peace; when i obey, i am at peace."

"So, you are generous?"

"No, i am selfless, that is different."

"And how is it different?"

"It is different in that the selfless servant receives through the pleasure of others, whereas the gifts of the generous are contaminated with pride."

"I see. Is there more?"

"There is always more."

And the short version:

"What are you doing?"

"i am at work."

i do not pretend to be an expert on obedience, but i do know what works for me. If i had time and permission, i would trot off to the library and do some research on what has been written about the topic, and i suspect that i would find a wealth of information on it.

Since obedience has been one of the standard vows taken in numerous religious traditions, and since that vow has been so troublesome for tens of thousands down through religious history, i assume there has been much written about it by those who know of the struggle with obedience from those perspectives. If the tools i now use to stabilize my slave identity into comfortable and joyous obedience should ever fail me someday, i would beg permission to research the thinking of those wiser men and women in the hope that their words would offer me some fresh guidance. Without working tools, those who would be, must be, slaves will eventually encounter difficulty with the achievement of a clear obedience.

i hope its evident that i have very real doubts that a meaningful experience of slavery can be had without first working through the issues associated with obedience in some way or other. Those who seek the special bliss of slavery will have to

come to terms with this issue in a way that makes sense for them. i have tried to present my opinions and experience of the obedience issue in the hope that, at least they will provide a jumping off point for those who wrestle with this issue to become slaves.

For me, obedience is the most sublime meditation to be found in slavery; it is the axis around which my submission revolves. Almost all the other issues in slavery relate to obedience in some way or other. It is the lens through which my view of slavery becomes clarified, refined and purified.

Essay 6

The Principle of Transparency

Slaving is the primary and favorite source of bliss in my life. i crave to be owned, body, mind, heart, and soul.

But i cannot be owned if i cannot be seen, because the Master cannot exercise ownership of what He doesn't know about. And, at least for now, i believe that He cannot master me if i am hiding from Him in any way. In fact, to the extent that i can hide myself from the Master, i am not surrendering to Him. By hiding something, anything, i undermine His power and my respect for Him - essentially, i castrate Him (figuratively, of course) without His even knowing it and, simultaneously, sabotage my surrender. Ball cutting slaves are the undoing of Masters. i believe this because i have asked Them about it.

For me, my secrets keep Him from knowing me and from having me entirely. The capacity within me for secrecy has become my enemy. my slavery is compromised by any obscurity within myself. He can see my body and can take and use it for His toy, but He cannot see into my mind unless it is transparent - open to Him. And it is my job to make and keep it transparent. So, Transparency....openness, is one of the principles that guide me in my submission to Him.

On Transparency

When i was a child and played with children, we believed that we could dissolve clouds if we concentrated hard enough on doing that. my mind is like the sky, sometimes clear and sometimes cloudy with fears, secrets, desires, and dreams. Clearness only comes when all the clouds are pointed out to the Master and given names, descriptions, and meaning. Once they

are pointed out to Him, the clouds dissolve and there is no longer an opportunity for me to hide within them. Until then, they are me hiding myself from Him. By focusing on the principle - the ideal - of Transparency, and the tools i use to become transparent to Him, communication between us becomes easier. The Master is unafraid, or at least less afraid, of what He knows about in my mind, but He is concerned about those things in my mind that He cannot see. In this way, He is like a blind man and i must tell Him about the sights that only i can see inside myself. Some of the things inside my mind are funny, some are sexy, insecure, interesting, beautiful, fearful, stupid, vain, wistful, sad, exciting, and others are just plain boring to Him, but all of them add up to me. And i am who He wants for now.

But that could change. i like to think that i have some influence over whether, when, and perhaps even how it might change. To the extent that i believe that if i can be the best slave possible for Him, the odds are better that he will continue to keep me in His life, which, at least for now, is where i want to be. Only time will tell. i try not to dwell in the future because it is, ultimately, unknowable and unpredictable, and subject to change as determined by events in the present.

"Always in motion is the Future."

-Yoda, Jedi Master

The present is more comforting to me because i am in it now, and have a lot more information about it. i can experience it directly. The future must wait until it becomes the present for me someday. The future is what i call "Master Business" because They have final authority over planning. slaves do much better emotionally when we stay in the present. Meanwhile, it is my job to keep myself transparent.

i guess the easiest way to describe what that is like for me

is to say that i imagine myself sort of like a computer screen. As thoughts or feelings flash, or sometimes crawl, through my mind, i report those to Him. i project them onto the screen, as it were, for Him to know about if He cares to. If He looks bored, I'll ask if He wants to hear this stuff. In time, i have come to know what is important to Him and what is less so, and what is not at all important.

When i have thoughts or feelings that i suspect He will want to hear about, i wait for an opportune moment and then interject with, "By the way, Sir, i had some thoughts about (whatever). i wonder if you want to hear them now, later, or not at all." When he says, "Yes, now," i hit the "download" button in my mind and the information comes out in words and goes up on the screen, so to speak, for Him to read (hear, actually). When He says, "Yes, but later." i hit the "save" button in my head; a "No" activates the "delete" button and the information either disappears or goes into deep storage somewhere in my mind from where it may or may not be retrievable later. Ideally, this is how transparency works for me.

This process is easy when it comes to our shared interest in Christmas, old cars, national politics, nature programs, and such. It is more difficult when the issues involve personal stuff. "i saw a man today whose ass i wanted to worship, and i felt disloyal to You." Or perhaps, "i wonder if You will be able to take more time off work someday." Or, "i saw a guy today at the gym that i'm sure is just Your physical type. i wonder if You would you like me to check him out for You?"

And it can be very difficult when it comes to reporting other material. "i get frightened when i think that someday You might not want me anymore." Or, "When You do (whatever), i can feel my respect for you shifting." Or, "i wonder if someday we won't be attractive to each other." Or, "i don't know if i could stay with a Master who had lost interest in hurting me."

Difficult as these things have been for me to say, i have

said them all to Him at one time or another, and sometimes more than once. But there is no other way for Him to know the contents of my mind, and i believe my submission might be seriously compromised if i did not report such thoughts when they happen. In this way, He has come to know me very well and has done so in a very short time as relationships go. And we love each other very much, although, in very different ways. We are different species. He is a Master. i am a slave.

You will notice from the content of some of the things mentioned above, that many of the cloudy thoughts that were blowing through my mind had to do with the Future. By sharing them, i came to learn just how dangerous it is for me to think about the future at all. As my surrender to the Master deepened, i became more and more comfortable just staying in the present because i came to trust that the Future was His to manage, not mine. Without Transparency, i might never had come to that awareness.

Transparency is not a two-way street. Privacy is one of a Master's rights and privileges. He tells me what He chooses to tell. i do not feel that same sense of choice. i can hide nothing unless He orders me to do so. Yet, every time i have been transparent in Master/slave contexts, the Masters soon became more forthcoming about Their inner life than had been Their habit before. Without exception, They all told me how much They liked the feeling.

Maybe transparency is contagious. Maybe They feel safer when in the presence of such extreme mental vulnerability as transparency generates. i don't know. i do know that the feeling of intimacy that such openness generates feels good to me. The Master and i talk together a lot, although less now than earlier. We know each other well, and like each other very much. Another benefit of such intimacy is that the sex we have (always BDSM) gets better and better for both of us. i have noticed that

if i have had some feelings or thoughts that i think He would find important to know about, i can't feel clean about beginning an SM Scene with Him until i have gotten those thoughts and feelings off my chest. He finds that i am easier and more fun to work (play) with when i'm not hiding something in my mind.

The Transparency principle operates in the dungeon until He turns off those switches in my head. Or, it goes on and off as the Scenes unfold. Come to think of it, the idea of transparency first began for me in the dungeon long before i met the current Master. It is the day-to-day, mental version of my learning to be honest in SM Scenes. Since the 24/7 Master/slave relationship is a continual Scene, the honesty is a logical extension.

To make transparency work, i have assigned part of my mind to the role of watchdog. That part of my mind has the task of monitoring my inner, mental life. When the watchdog notices that i am withholding something, he sounds an alarm. This watchdog is the primary tool of the transparency principle.

When the alarm sounds in my mind, i have tried to train myself to turn my attention to the information or feelings that i am hiding. i do this until i am certain i know what i am hiding, and, if possible, why i feel the need to hide it. As soon as i have the answers to these questions, i seek the Master and announce that i have a report to make. This behavior is the watchdog tool in action. If He decides to hear it right then, i will tell Him what i have discovered in myself, that i noticed myself hiding something, followed by what was being hidden and the reason i felt i needed to hide it.

i don't always get the complete answers from inside myself right away. Sometimes i am only able to detect a piece of the hidden information, and i may not yet have figured out why i felt the need to keep it secret. i don't allow myself to think about the hidden information for more than about 10 minutes when we are near each other before i begin the process. If we are apart for

some reason, i will make myself get as clear as i can about the hidden stuff before i see Him next. As soon as we are together again, and i see He has nothing particular on His mind, i will bring it up with something like "i noticed myself hiding something from (or about) You today. And i am wondering if You would like to hear about it now?"

When i have only part of the information from inside myself, i will tell Him that, and then share it with Him. Often, He will then ask me questions about the topic and, sometimes, His questions will help me fill in the missing details. He will often tell me to report the missing information from inside myself as it becomes available at some later date. Or, sometimes, He orders me to just make guesses about it which, of course, i do.

It has become clear to me that 90 percent of the time, the hiding and secrecy are about my fear, plain and simple: fear that He will think me disloyal, stupid, without ethics, shallow, vain, self-important, silly, feminine, arrogant, mean-spirited, or what have you. Most of the rest of the time, it is about shame of some sort or other. By now, He has learned that i am all of these things sometimes, and usually He just chalks it up to the fact that i'm human and have all the usual human failings. And since a human slave is what He wants, my fears and hiding usually mean much less to Him than they do to me. He loves and wants me in spite of them, and sometimes because of them. The more He accepts me for what i am, the more completely i become His.

Essay 7

The Principle of Humility

Taking a sail boat out for the day, or day-sailing as it is called, is great fun for those who enjoy such things. As best i can tell, day-sailing seems to be the usual way that people develop an interest in sailing. Some day-sailors really do catch the sailing bug and their interest grows to the point where they may take classes, buy a boat, and seek the company of others who also sail. Depending on location, sooner or later, these day-sailors encounter what are called "world cruisers" - people who take their sailboats across deep waters to distant ports.

When world cruisers bring their boats into the marina, the day-sailors look up from their work or their drinks, and in a glance, instantly recognize the differences in the rigging required on deep-water boats, the specialized equipment, and the way the world cruisers move about on their crafts. And the stories they have to tell about their voyages are, of course, different. Meeting the challenges of an ocean crossing is, after all, a different sort of experience than taking the boat out to enjoy the daylight hours.

None of this means to suggest that world cruising is better than day-sailing; both have their own dangers, rewards, challenges, excitements, and costs. Some day-sailors will try their hand at world cruising, but most of them won't for various reasons including, "Those people are crazy!" And many world cruisers come to a day when they no longer wish a life on the high seas and return to day-sailing or give up sailing altogether. So what?

Similarly, slaving for an evening or a weekend now and then is a very different experience than choosing to live life as a twenty-four hour-a-day, seven day-a-week (24/7) slave in service to one or more Masters. Brief excursions out onto the Sea of Surrender are a very different matter than living out there full-time. Doing

a Scene as a slave is worlds away from having an identity as a slave; for the former, slaving may be just one of many erotic delights, but for the latter, slaving is a destiny, a meditation, a way of life, a song one sings, sometimes with every breath.

As with world cruising, additional tools may be necessary if one is to survive and flourish as a 24/7 slave. Navigating the deepest waters of submission is challenging. For those who choose to confine their slaving to occasional weekend encounters with various Masters, the need to submit, coupled with a conditional obedience, is usually enough to produce a good time and get one's slave rocks off for a while.

But for those of us who have realized that slavery is at the very core of our erotic identities, and that the decision to be a slave is the very best decision we can make for ourselves in life, these two things are insufficient to the calling. Additional tools are needed. One purpose of this little book is to offer slaves a set of tools that can help make better slaves. Better slaves give better service. Better service means better Masters. And better Masters mean better experiences.

Humility

The principle of humility is an easy proposition for some slaves and a hard one for others. Because we are raised in the world of humans, we tend to take on the characteristics of humans. This includes learning to desire credit or recognition for a job done well. We are taught that it is a good thing to be proud of who we are, our talents, our abilities, and many other things as well. We learn that seeking attention through achievement of worthy goals is a good thing. And so, we do our best in the hopes that someone will notice and reward our efforts with something we like: a smile, a touch, a medal, a paycheck, a trophy, a promotion, a gift, privileges, and the like. Receiving these things reinforces us to strive for more.

The practice of humility, and it is a practice, is one of the things that can help make it possible to flourish as a full-time slave. Among other things, slavery is about selflessness. Without the selflessness that comes with humility, those who would be slaves encounter all sorts of difficulty. When we are prideful, we can find ourselves competing with Masters for attention. Or, we might find ourselves manipulating people and situations in the hope of coming to a Master's attention. These are attempts to control. And control is the province of Masters, not slaves, unless They assign it to us. Our attempts to control take us further away from the bliss of slavery, not toward it.

The lawn where i am currently permitted to live and serve appears to be under my control, but only because the Master here wants it so. Through me, He controls the lawn. i am His instrument. When He praises the lawn and gardens, i am tempted to take pride in my work there, but to do so would be a trap. Pride and arrogance are the enemies of humility. It is the Master who makes the lawn beautiful. It is my good fortune to be provided a comfortable and beautiful place to slave. He has my gratitude for making the lawn the way it is. my labor is His because i am his.

When we slave with a humble attitude, the gift of our service and pleasuring is uncontaminated with pride. The Masters we serve become the center of our universe. For this to happen, we must first take ourselves out of the center of our world to make room for the Masters around whom our lives may then revolve. Without a clear understanding of humility and its role in our lives, the pure bliss of slavery can often remain out of reach, perhaps permanently.

Being humble--behaving with humility--is not the same as being weak, spineless, wimpy, or the like. Indeed, humility requires great mental strength. It takes strength to overcome all the human training that teaches us to be proud, vain, and self-

important. As i have observed in an earlier essay, slavery requires bravery. More than one Master has told me that they don't have time for weak people in their lives. Daddies usually have interest in turning weak boys into strong ones and in mentoring boys into maturity and facilitating their growing independence. Masters have a very different agenda, as a rule.

Masters have also mentioned that They often get more pleasure when mastering a slave who is strong, either physically, mentally, or both. The submission seems to mean more somehow. Typically, the stronger, more resourceful, and more powerful a slave is, the more valuable he is to his Master.

i also know that some slaves have great pride; some of these serve with great ceremony and much self-importance.....i know because i've seen it. And so have the Masters they serve. What's true is that some Masters like this pride in Their slaves. Some Masters like it because They feel that it amplifies Their dominance to have authority over such slaves. And other Masters have different reasons as well. i've always assumed that such slaves have this pride because it suits their Masters for them to have it, and that if the Masters didn't like it, it wouldn't be there.

Some Masters allow Their slaves pride as a gift, or a reward. Other Masters have told me that They encourage pride in Their slaves to bolster the slave's self-esteem, or to prevent a broken spirit from developing. Whatever the reason, pride is a thing that these Masters have either allowed or cultivated in Their slaves for reasons of Their own---it is not my place to judge what another Master wants in a slave.

For me, slavery is a spiritual path, and i've learned that my way along that path is made smoother without such pride, so i do my best to cultivate its neutralizing opposite - humility. But slavery is not a spiritual path for many, perhaps most slaves, and so their need for humility may be different from mine. slaves who feel that their pride adds to who they are as slaves, and people

will therefore choose to serve Masters who likewise enjoy pride in a slave, and that's fine, of course.

Having said all this, it is useful at this point to turn aside for a moment to mention humiliation briefly because, in the English language, the words humiliation and humility appear, at first glance, to be more closely related to each other than is actually the case for our purposes here. Humility is the state of being humble of mind or spirit; it is the absence of pride or self-assertion. Notice that the word describes a condition that one's mind or spirit might be in. It is a noun and not a verb. There is no pain associated with humility.

Humiliation, on the other hand, is either the act of lowering another person's pride or dignity, or the emotional pain of having one's pride or dignity lowered, either on one's own, or at the hand of another. This is a process, or the result of a process, which often includes some kind of emotional pain as the pride within us is reduced or burned away. Humiliation produces an injury to one's pride. Were it not for the presence of pride or dignity, emotional injury or pain would *not* be possible.

By this reasoning, a slave in the state of humility is a person without pride or dignity and, therefore, can not be truly humiliated. In place of pride or dignity, the slave experiences confidence in his obedience and submission, and the Master, along with the freedom that flows from these - a very different set of feelings.

Masters will sometimes do humiliating things to slaves, both to determine the extent of a slave's remaining pride, and because They sometimes enjoy it. Because movement toward humility can involve humiliating experiences if the Master wishes to use them, we can sometimes feel emotional pain during that growth towards humility. Probably the most common tool used by Masters to develop humility is obedience to Their will. They will have us do humiliating things for Their pleasure, and/or to

develop humility in us.

To slave well, one tends to do a better job of it with a clear mind. Humility can become a daily tonic that helps clear the mind and thus more easily harness it to the Master's will. But to use humility in this way, one must take the tonic of humility whenever the opportunity to do so presents itself. Taking the tonic of humility means cultivating it as a desirable state of mind.

The Cultivation of Humility

So how does one cultivate humility? i suppose there are many ways to cultivate humility. i don't know them all. i do know what seems to be working for me, at least for now, so i offer it below in the hopes that it might be helpful to others.

For me, the cultivation of humility begins, i think, with careful observation of my external behavior and the internal motives for that behavior. This careful self-observation is the primary tool i try to use in the exercise of the humility principle.

i walk slightly behind the Master and just to His left. Why? Is it to trumpet my submission to the world and say, "Look at me. i'm a slave to this Man. Aren't i special," or is it to honor Him? When i am naked in the Master's home, is it because i am proud of my body, my nakedness, or is it because i enjoy the exposure, or because He has ordered it so? Since i am alone inside my mind, only i know the real answer. And if the answer is about me, then i am not coming from a humble place in my heart but rather from an attention-seeking place in my ego.

Any time and every time my motives for my behavior are about me, my insecurities, my doubts, my neediness, my ego, my satisfaction, my vanity, my fear, then i am very far from the goal of humility. To discover my distance from humility, i must first pay attention to what i do and why, and i must do this with the most fearless honesty i can muster within myself.

i doubt that a slave can measure his closeness to humility - only the distance from it. Anyone who claims to be humble is not humble by the very definition of the word. Pride in one's humility is not humble. It is pride and, where there is pride, there is no humility. Progress is the objective here, not perfection. The slave who is perfected in humility would not know it, for the conscious thought of perfection in one's self is prideful and, therefore, not humble. And so, the first step in the direction of humility, the chief tool, is self-awareness.....not self-preoccupation.

As you will have guessed by now, i am a great believer in the power of ritual. Perhaps this has something to do with my particular religious upbringing. i don't know. Whatever the source, it has been helpful for me to build into my daily life a series of rituals that are designed to help me become a less prideful and arrogant person and, hopefully, a better slave.

Outside the dungeon, the Master i currently serve has little interest in ritual, and so these are rituals that i have imposed upon myself to help me in my effort to humble myself. Of course, the Master can intervene in any of these rituals if He chooses to do so, but, for the most part, He tends to see them as me doing the internal work of slavery, and does not concern Himself with them unless they annoy Him or distract Him in some way.

All these little rituals are informed by some loose guidelines. They are:

- Try not to attract attention.
- Try to put one's self last in situations where it is practical and unobtrusive to do so; always being last in line can attract attention too. Sometimes the middle of a line can be less conspicuous.
- Try to leave the most comfortable accommodations free for others to enjoy. Attend to the comfort of others first.
- Put the Master ahead of yourself, unless He wishes otherwise.

- Try not to be grand, arrogant, or loud.
- Avoid activities that might generate pride.

Specifically, some of my humility rituals are as follows. i try not to sit down in public until the Master is seated and has indicated where He wants me to sit. When serving the Master food or drink, i try to serve Him first and completely before i attend to myself. When sleeping in a bed, my place is the least convenient unless the Master orders otherwise. i try not to interrupt Him when He is speaking. i try to avoid angry, whiny, petulant, or insolent tones of voice when speaking to anyone. When removing the hair from my body, i try to have the Master in mind. When sitting in a chair, i try not to use the back to lean on unless He orders it to be so. When entering a room, i try to do so unnoticed. i try to be deferential to His friends and business associates. i try to choose plates, glasses, and silverware for myself that are smaller than His, and will sometimes eat with my fingers.

i walk behind Him and a bit to His left. i try to piss only into toilets, and only with my right knee on the floor. When with the Master, i try to pass through doorways behind Him unless He wishes otherwise - but occasionally, He will humiliate me by opening the door for me. i try not to refer to Him as "my" Master because i do not own Him. He is "the one i serve," or "the Master." i try not to take credit for anything done well. i do make contributions to raffles and such, but do not take tickets because i don't want to risk winning; i win by not winning.

When traveling alone on business, my clothing and things are unpacked into the bottom drawers and the back of the closets. The top drawers, front of the closets, and the most convenient locations are left vacant. When using hallways or stairways alone, especially big ones, i try to avoid the center. When in public, i try to choose an inconspicuous place to sit or stand. i try not to eat all the food on my plate even when i am hungry. When given a choice of chairs, i try to choose the least comfortable

unless doing so attracts undue attention. In the Master's home, i do not use furniture, except as specified for me, unless doing so would cause the Master discomfort.

One of the other paths to humility that is even more powerful than these ritual reinforcements is obedience, because to be truly obedient is a humbling thing. i have commented at length on obedience in the fifth essay, and so i shall not repeat myself here. It is enough to say that humility seems impossible for slaves without obedience.

These, and many other small things like them, taken together, are the ways in which i try to practice humility. And still, i find pride, vanity, and arrogance creeping into my mind from time to time. Sometimes i notice traces of improvement; they are not consistent, but i have hope. my failures teach me more than my successes, and i continue to learn. So can you.

Essay 8

Permutations

The four previous essays comment on the first four principles guiding me in my slavery: Identity, Obedience, Transparency, and Humility. They're grouped together because i believe they form the bedrock of my slavery, the four cornerstones if you wish.

Even so, depending on the personalities and appetites of some Masters, these four principles alone may not be enough to help slaves, under certain circumstances. The following ideas may help cover some other bases. No doubt for some who read on, they will seem obvious and not worth mentioning. But i certainly wish they had been available to me when i was a teenager trying to wrestle with the strong, magnetic pull of slavery.

The Rheostat

Concept: The slave as fully customizable--fully adjustable, and capable of being molded to the Master's specifications, without loss of personality.

For most Masters, control is important to one degree or another, depending on Their personalities. Ideally, any given Master will elect to determine for Himself those things He wants authority over, despite local customs, traditions, or other outside influences. The range of possibilities here is very wide.

For example, in spite of the stereotype that suggests that Masters are allowed to smoke cigars while slaves are not, there are some Masters out there who will find it sexy when a slave smokes a cigar. Such a Master might want His slave to smoke cigars, possibly even more so if the slave did not smoke or even

hated cigar smoke. If a Master has the power to forbid a slave to smoke, then surely He also has the power to make a slave start smoking.

To mold one's self to the will of such a Master, the slave would have to be able to reach down inside himself, turn down or turn off any objection to smoking or to cigars, and learn how to smoke them in a way that the Master found sexy. If slaving is all about the Master's pleasure, and a given slave wants to belong to this particular Master, then the slave would have to find the rheostats within himself that adjusted his opinions about cigar smoking.

And yes, this is really just an application of the obedience principle. i take the time here to offer this example specifically because when thinking about obedience, we may see it in terms that are too narrow to cover many of the situations that can and do come up in Master/slave relationships, both long and short-term. Obedience means obedience!

Using another example, in spite of the stereotype that suggests the Master is always right, some Masters will want a slave to be a capable verbal sparring partner - someone with whom to argue issues. If a slave wanted to be with such a Master, that slave would have to reach down inside himself, disable any "Master is no one to argue with" programming, and find it in himself to offer contrary discussion when his opinion differed from that of the Master.

In a similar vein, some Masters enjoy playing card or board games, but also want a worthy opponent. In the Master's home where i am permitted to live and serve, the Master is an avid and highly skilled card player, so i have had to learn to play cards, and play to win. The Master has revealed what is fun for Him, and this is one way i participate in His amusement. This is my job. By exerting His control over me, He gets His amusement. By this reasoning, not only do i win when i lose at cards, but i win when i win. Cool, huh?

Sometimes, the Master wants me to drive; other times, He takes the wheel Himself - His call, of course. Likewise, there are times He wants me to surprise Him by choosing what will be prepared and served for dinner. To do this, any programming in my head that suggests that all those decisions are His to make must be disabled. There are some times when Masters will want us to be on what i call "The Autopilot." This means that we have to have an "autopilot" in the first place and know where those switches are in our heads.

There are two things that activate my internal rheostats and alert them to the need to readjust myself. The first is when i observe that He is not pleased with something i've done or not done. When His displeasure registers in my head, unless He "adjusts" me somehow, i know i must take action and readjust myself. The second thing is when i notice the occurrence of what i will call "contrary feelings" coming up inside myself. Sometimes this happens when He does something that i am resistant to, or that i disapprove of in some way.

For example, when He moved me into his home, He assigned control of the kitchen to me. "I don't cook so this shall be your domain," He said, "Arrange it any way you want, and make it work." Soon, the kitchen was arranged to suit my cooking habits. One day, the Master came in and said, "I don't like this phone placed here," and with that, He moved it elsewhere on the counter. Inside, i bristled and thought, "But You said. . ." And that bristling activated my internal sentry, and i chilled out. In this instance, i was lucky because both mechanisms worked to alert the sentry. But knowing i must change my head and its attitude is not the same as changing it.

To actually operate the rheostats in my head, i use - yes, you guessed it - a mental ritual. The ones i use go something like this:

"we exist only to serve."
"How can i serve Him now?"
"i serve Him by surrendering my agitation."
"my agitation is His enemy."
"my agitation is my enemy."
"His wish is my command."

As i am saying any of these things to myself, i look at His boots, or His hands, or His face, and i see Him as the Master, and see how lucky i am to serve Him. Doing this makes my internal agitations disappear.

With perhaps rare exception, Masters take no joy in struggling with slaves mentally or emotionally. Masters are people who like things to go Their way. It has become my belief that unless slaves learn to bend their will, personalities, attitudes, and bodies to their Masters' wishes, the relationships are at risk of becoming stormy and will likely collapse eventually. For this reason, slaves are advised to make contact with, develop, and learn to operate their internal rheostats, as a refinement of obedience.

The Principle of Attention

Concept: The primary focus of slaves is the Master(s).

Whenever the Master where i am currently permitted to live and serve is in the room or even somewhere nearby, He is the center of my attention. He is even often the center of my attention when we are at a distance from each other. Slavery is the axis around which my life revolves, and He has become the focal point of my slavery. i am devoted to Him, His comfort, His pleasure, and the satisfaction of His appetites. Part of my job is to be attentive to Him. To do this, it is important to look at Him and pay close attention whenever He speaks or moves.

This can sometimes be a challenge because life is dis-

tracting: my job places some demands on me and my attention; sometimes my birth family can be distracting; and at other times my own body can be distracting (i have a cold as i write this). But even in distraction, the Master is my first and foremost priority. And yes, this is part of the first principal i discussed - the Principle of Identity.

When i notice that i am distracted - what i first called identity drift in the essay on Identity - it is my job to bring myself back into focus on the Master. i do this with a simple mental ritual. i ask myself, "What is the most important facet of my life?" And the answer, the Master, drives all the distractions from my mind. To reinforce this focus, when i have turned my mind away from whatever is distracting it, i engage some of the identity rituals. my personal favorite is to close my eyes, stick my "mental face" into one of His boots, and inhale deeply. When i do this, i can actually smell His boots, and i sail right back to who i am, who He is, and what we are about. You may discover that other recollections of the Master will bring you back and center you. Do what works.

On Sacrifice

Concept: To give up one's own pleasure, comfort, and satisfaction for another; to inconvenience oneself for another.

To become a slave and remain blissfully happy in slavery, one must be able to replace one's desire for pleasures that are independent of the Master's will. This means that when our desires come into conflict with whatever the Master wants, it is always the Master's will that prevails. This means giving up emotional investment in what i might want for myself.

For example, if we are driving somewhere and i mention to Him that i am curious to see the progress of a new building that is going up, He might respond with something like, "No, I want

to pick up the dry cleaning and that building is out of the way." Because i wanted to see the building, i might feel disappointment at His decision; if i don't do anything about my disappointment, it may build into resentment, or even anger. In situations like this, it is my task to sacrifice my desire and replace it with pleasure that the Master will soon have His dry cleaning. And the same thing goes for books i'd like to read, movies i'd like to see, writing i'd like to do, chores that must be done, telephone calls that i'd like to make, or any other thing i might like to do, including sexual service.

Unless slaves can become adept at sacrificing---giving up---personal desires and replacing such desires with an easy and comfortable obedience and compliance, relationships with Masters are destined to be stormy and, most probably, doomed to failure. Unless the slave has truly made up his mind that slavery is the best possible destiny, such sacrifices will eventually become difficult, if not impossible. But once this central decision has been made, obedience and the sacrifices that go with it become easier and easier until at last, they become second nature-automatic.

What's more, slaves with this point of view get to a place in our heads where every time we give something up for the Master, we feel that our slavery, our surrender, is renewed and reinforced. So, i've lost the pleasure of seeing the building, but i've gained my slavery. i've lost the opportunity to make that phone call, but i've gained my slavery. And when slavery is the most important thing in the world, joy is the result in my life.

The careful reader will at once recognize that the above remarks are really just elaborations of ideas contained in the cornerstone principles: Identity, Obedience, Transparency, and Humility. Even so, until a would-be slave truly begins to appreciate and understand the wide range of territory that each of these covers, then the risk of stumbling remains an ever-present danger.

Essay 9

Dealing with Fear

"I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. When the fear has gone, there will be nothing. Only I will remain."

-from the Bene Gesserit Litany against Fear
In *Dune* by Frank Herbert (1965)

Surely the most common thing that stands between us and our impulses to surrender to the call of slavery is fear. In many slave brains, fear is the more or less constant hurricane that howls with a roar that nearly drowns out the impulses themselves; nearly, that is, but not ever completely, and not for long. The craving to be a slave whispers to us at night, when we are alone, like dreams sent from Zeus to torment us with visions of ourselves in slave bliss. It's usually when we begin to think about acting on those impulses that the hurricane of fear can start up and rage through our minds.

And the hurricane is scary because it blows big chunks of terror directly at us in the form of tough questions. "What if i get injured physically or emotionally?" "What if i lose total control of myself?" "What if i surrender to the point where i lose my identity?" "What will my life as a slave look like?" "What if i like it so much that i can't think of being anything else?" "What if i give myself to the quest for a Master, but then can't find the right one?" "What if i fall in love with a Master, but He doesn't love me?" "What if i give myself to a Master and am then later discarded?" "What if, what if, what if?" And the fear begins to paralyze us. We become frozen in a purgatory of indecision, living

in neither heaven nor hell. Or, as the song from the musical Oklahoma says, "...Longing for someone, but afraid to try; i let my golden chances pass me by."

The challenge, then, is to overcome these fears such that we can begin to act on our impulses to slave and begin the journey, or perhaps take the next steps along the path. And overcoming these fears is an on-going process, not a single event. The process begins, i think, with the willingness to be different from most other people. The need to conform - to be like other people - is the enemy, because those of us who would be slaves truly are different.

Because humans are basically herd animals, this willingness to be different means becoming willing to not be part of the herd. For males especially, these are tricky mental gymnastics because most of us are socialized to be part of the team, so to speak. Fortunately, we also get a piece of counter-programming when growing up which tells us to be individuals....to be your "own man."

Depending on the values we get when growing up, this stress on individuality varies from one person to another. For some of us that message is stronger, while for others it is weaker. That may be why some guys relate more to team sports, and others go for solo sports. The paradox for the would-be slave is to be both an individual and a follower. The challenge is to find a way of being individualistic in our style of following.

For males, there is another piece of social programming to be overcome, and that is the pressure to be a leader, to take charge, to strive for more responsibility and to use power, and to be successful as defined by society. This, too, must be overcome. This means that to honor a career as a slave, one might also need to turn one's back on some conventional definitions of "success."

Just the other day, i was talking to a Master who years

ago had insisted that His younger slave develop a career because the slave was bright and talented. Being a devoted slave, the boy complied with his Master's wish and as the career developed, the boy became less and less available to serve his Master. Eventually, a promotion took the slave to a distant city and the relationship was ended. The Master was bereft, and still is.

He now searches for another slave, but longs for His former boy, who is completely successful in business and has transferred his need to serve from his Master to his bosses. Clearly, the boy cared not for a career, but made one to please his Master; neither realized the long-term consequences for their relationship. Hopefully, both are wiser now. Masters, too, must be willing to understand the difference between being a Daddy and a Master, and be willing to validate slavery as a legitimate destiny in and of itself.

But even as i say this, i also know of a number of conventionally successful slaves - very successful - who flourish in slavery. Their Masters want them to work and do well, but only in careers that leave time to slave and thus protect the relationship. In every case where this configuration happens, it is always the slave's identity as a slave that is primary; all other identities come second. No career decision that could threaten the boy's slavery is tolerated by either. Both Master and slave understand fully what is most important to them. It is worth turning aside here to note that many non-kinky married couples must confront precisely the same set of decisions, so what i'm describing here is not so unusual as it might appear at first glance. Please keep that in mind.

In any case, the powerful social programming to be independent and successful by conventional measures might sometimes need to be overridden and surrendered in order to achieve the joys of slavery. Only a clear focus on one's destiny as a slave can reinforce the systematic decisions that will have to be made to protect the Master/slave connection, just as with any other sort

of relationship.

To survive the fear of slavery and move forward, it will be very helpful to get firmly grounded in reality. Spend some time searching out Master/slave teams and try to discover how their lives really work. The more you do this, the more likely it is that you'll find that many of your fears have no basis in reality. To begin with, the world is a less dangerous place than you imagine. Many of us who pursue slavery do so without serious trouble in our lives. we have real jobs, real families, we play cards, go to movies, attend funerals, pay our taxes, shop for cat food, and think about a new car from time to time.

It is very rare that anyone outside the leather world ever discovers what we are or what we do behind closed doors. Even inside the leather world, very few have the first clue about how our relationships with Masters work either. How you conduct your relationships, whatever they are, is frankly, no one's business, unless you choose to make it theirs. Unless you've chosen a Master who takes a very serious interest in public humiliation, it is highly unlikely that anyone will ever be the wiser. Besides, Masters who have a passion for public humiliation tend to choose slaves who share that passion or who are indifferent to the consequences, if any.

Most outsiders really couldn't give a damn how you live your life if your choices don't directly affect them. Religious fanatics, of course, are an exception, but i refuse to allow a Baptist minister whom i've never met to blackmail me or shame me out of my own fulfillment. i was born an American before i became anything else, and our Constitution guarantees me the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" as i define those words. For me, those things are found in slavery.

Many who are interested in slavery have serious concerns about their families. Such would-be slaves usually live in

terror that their families might find out about their slave interests and be somehow hurt by that knowledge. Fine. Why do they need to know? How would they find out?

The Principle of Transparency obligates a slave to report any such fears to any Master he may be involved with, and at that point the Master will weigh the possible impact on His pleasure seeking. In my experience, the vast majority of Masters are quite willing to shield a slave's family from discovering the slave's reality. The fallout for the Master is simply a pain in the ass that most Masters just won't want to bother with. It is usually much easier for Him to keep the slave's family in the dark about such things.

Now i know that some readers will immediately start screaming that i am an assimilationist or some such crap, and that it would be a better world if we would all just come out and be honest about who and what we are. To those who criticize my position on this point, i will only say that the world will not be a better place by having my mother learn about this feature of who i am. i know the lady and i like my relationship with her just the way it is, thank you. Breaking her heart with information she can't possibly grasp will not improve the world, i'm quite sure. Critics are welcome to do their own coming out if they wish, and leave my Master to manage this matter as He sees fit. No one but me walks in my shoes, and i am already as "out" as my Master thinks i need to be for today.

i move through airport security with a clearly visible chain locked around my neck, and nobody even looks at me cross-eyed. i'm usually looking right into their eyes anyway as they see the collar, and i look at them with no shame. i am lucky to be a slave. i could have had a boring life in Podunk instead, but i got lucky. If my Aunt Tilly happens to run into me there and asks about the collar, then i'll have to deal with that as best i can, along with whatever fallout that generates. And yes, sometimes, living an adventure costs us something. And yes, sometimes we

have to pay up. If i should one day bump into the lady in an airport, i can promise you that i won't evaporate in a cloud of shame and fear. i would not so dishonor my Master that way. Or my slavery. i've worked hard for it and i will not apologize for it to anyone. Ever.

As i have said earlier, slavery requires bravery. It is no place for cowards. Working through these fears will make you less of a coward if you are one now. The good news is that you don't have to work through these fears all by yourself. If you are lucky enough to come to the attention of a worthy Master, He will be your best supporter and ally. After all, it is in His best interest to see to it that He is the only source of stress in your life.

i sometimes hear from slaves that they also have fears about descending to a level of slavery in which they can no longer really function on their own any longer. This degree of dependency can be truly terrifying, especially if the connection between you and the One you serve feels tenuous or shaky in any way. There are some Masters who take great delight in fostering an ever-deepening dependence on Them. Perhaps this is Their way of defending Themselves against being abandoned Themselves. Motives vary. i've been there and i know from painful experience that this fear is very, very real.

When the relationship with my former Master ended, i was very shaky for about three months during which time it was difficult to make whole categories of decisions for myself, and that scared me deeply. But slowly, my decision-making abilities came back on line, as it were, and i began to learn how to function independently again, although i hated having to do so. It took me about six months to become fully independent again, but it happened. In retrospect, it feels like i traded all that discomfort for the joys i experienced during the best parts of that relationship. i don't regret any of that period in my life. It was just the price i paid to grow and learn more about who i am and what i

need to have joy in my life.

my guess is that psychologically healthy Masters generally want slaves who can function on our own when necessary, sort of like being on autopilot.

Some people who are interested in slavery have what psychologists call "Dependent Personality Disorders." Those "would be" slaves see slavery as a way to avoid needing to acquire the skills of independent functioning. Masters i've spoken with about this type of slave all complain that they soon become more of a burden than a pleasure, and Masters sometimes talk of having to disengage from such slaves. This situation is a reflection of a psychological problem in the slave, and not a problem inherent in slavery. Most Masters want a slave's independence to be disabled only when it suits the Master, and not at other times.

This means that, even when such a relationship comes to an end, the slave can recover enough of his independence to become fully functional again. This is a good thing. But the process can be tough. Too bad. If you want the joys of slavery, then there are risks to be taken. If you are not good at taking risks, then your interest in slavery may be better confined to short-term encounters. Long term relationships may not be for you, at least not until your comfort level with vulnerability and risk taking rises.

Some Tools

Clearly, the first stage of learning to work with fear in adulthood must be recognition, that is to say, making conscious contact with fear. By contrast, most of us move through life dealing with fear on the basis of our unconscious contact with fear. Thanks to the genetic mechanisms of evolution, thousands of years ago our bodies acquired triggers buried deep in our brain chemistry that alert us to danger. Our word for this alert is Fear.

There are dramatic changes that occur in our bodies when faced with danger, including radical shifts in our hormones such as adrenaline, and also the release of endorphins and enkephalins, along with corresponding changes in our heart and respiration rates. The linkage between these responses and the action centers in our brains is very direct. Consequently, our impulse is to act before we think, as if by instinct. Making conscious contact with fear means that we train ourselves to actually recognize what we are feeling. So, we get, "Damn, I'm afraid!" as a thought that passes through our brains and may even cause us to repeat the statement aloud .

It is usually impossible to spot something if we're not looking for it. When looking for car keys, we will scan our surroundings and ignore thousands of things that are not car keys. This happens because we have a set of switches in our minds to register and alert us the instant the keys are glimpsed. Our brains are trained to do this at a very early age, especially when it comes to scanning for objects....like toys, for example. The basis for this is desire. We want that particular toy. Because we already have this skill with objects, training ourselves to scan for feelings is really just a new application of an old skill. The chief difference, of course, is that instead of looking out into the world for something, we learn to look inside ourselves with our mind's "eye." We are groping around inside ourselves for feelings.

This is a really good skill to have anyway, and once we make up our minds to learn it, the application of this old skill to our emotions develops faster than most of us would guess. It is important because, to conquer something, one must first be able to recognize it.

The second stage of learning to work with any feeling, including fear, is to decide what it means. We have to decide whether or not we like this present fear or not. The wide popu-

larity of scary movies, books, plays, some kinds of BDSM scenes and sport activities is enough to suggest that, at least sometimes, we enjoy fear and seek the feeling. Most of us make this decision quickly and act accordingly. Practice helps. But for other fears, it takes longer to decide. This is especially so for unfamiliar fears, and *most* especially for those fears that few people ever have to confront. In short, the less information we have, the more confusing it becomes to make judgements about the fear. Like many animals, we tend to be wary of the unfamiliar. And, of course, the problem is in trying to get clarity on the true danger of the situation.

Since fear is our response to the perception of danger, the real key to assessment is to make sure that our perceptions of danger are reliable - that the thing we perceive as dangerous is, in fact, truly dangerous to us in some way that matters. When it comes to radical sexuality, this can be a real challenge because our early training about sex, both from family and the general culture, has usually taught us to be wary of anything other than reproductive sex. In the literature of human sexuality, this is called The Reproductive Bias.

The Reproductive Bias tells us that the only form of approved sex is that which happens between adults in a socially approved marriage, and results in an approved pregnancy. This bias is partially kept in place by conveying the impression that any other sort of sexual activity is dangerous in some way which is usually unspecified. And so, most, if not all, of us grow up believing that choosing anything else on the sexual smorgasbord table is unwise because it is dangerous for us in some way.

Even if we get past the barriers of the reproductive bias, the erotic adventurer may well encounter other concerns having to do with what i will call "a reduction of self." We more need to know that, somehow, our explorations of radical sexuality will

leave us with our self-respect, our values, our morality, and our ethics intact. Radical sexuality is often seen as being a threat to these things which are generally considered essential in a healthy, fully functioning person. In short, we don't want our explorations to damage us. Many people operate with the belief that any excursion into the world of radical sexuality will somehow burn the bridge to mental health behind them. The fear is that radical sex is dangerous and, once sampled, will somehow set the forces of self-destruction irreversibly in motion. This is simply not so.

Far worse is the notion that, even if some particular activity doesn't unleash the forces of self-destruction, the next activity may very well do so. Such perceptions of danger can result in the development of a chronically fearful state in regards to sexual exploration. Simply trying to dismiss such fears by calling them irrational is not helpful because all of these fears will feel the same whether they are rationally based or not. How then can one proceed?

Perhaps the best response to such fear may be to become something of a researcher, using yourself as the research subject. Following each excursion into radical sexuality, it can be helpful to sit down with yourself and ask some questions. Has doing that changed me? If so, how? Am i still a good person? Do i still like myself? Can i still distinguish right from wrong? Is my moral and ethical sense of myself any different? If there are changes, do i like them or not, and if not, then why not? Is my job affected? Are my relationships affected? Am i depressed afterward or elated? Do i feel refreshed by what i did, or do i feel depleted in an undesirable way? In other words, one can take a self-inventory to discover whether there is any proof that the erotic exploration was diminishing in some way.

The answers to these questions can function like a kind of steering mechanism that can be used to guide ourselves toward what feels good, and away from whatever does not. No one is expected to like every dish on the erotic smorgasbord table, and

none of us is expected to do things that end up making us feel worse about ourselves. With more and more practice at this process of self-evaluation, we begin to learn exactly what is truly dangerous for us in the world of erotic exploration and what is not.

And it can be very helpful for those who fear erotic exploration to keep a written journal that details this process. Try to make a point to write in it at least as often as there are experiences to write about, and also whenever fearful thoughts or feelings begin to crowd into your mind. At least every two months or so, remember to re-read everything that's been written down before as a way of reminding yourself where you have been and how you got to the present day. After all, no one gains anything useful from unnecessary danger, or from the fear that real danger engenders.

Exploring the world of radical sex ought to make people feel better about themselves, not worse. Baseless fear is the enemy of personal growth. Anything that enables us to achieve a more accurate view of those things that scare us is helpful; anything that does not simply impedes our own development into more whole people.

Now go and have yourself some fun!

And if you're not having fun, you're not doing it right.

"On the plains of Hesitation, bleach the bones of countless thousands, who, sitting down to wait for opportunity, died there."

--something my Mom said often

Essay 10

Using or Processing Pain

Some who are interested in slavery are also interested in SM (BDSM, Leathersex, S & M, sadomasochism), and others are not. Prospective Masters and slaves will have to choose each other accordingly. But for those slaves who like SM and seek Masters who are also sadists, there are some extra issues that arise. The slaves who desire to serve a sadistic Master's appetites may discover that the level at which the Master likes to work (play) exceeds the levels at which the slave has experience. Put differently, the Master may enjoy working more intensely than the slave has experience with, or the capacity to handle. What happens when the sadism of the Master exceeds the masochistic capabilities of the slave?

If the slave decides that he must submit to this particular sort of Master, the slave will want to satisfy that Master, and this may call for learning additional skills at processing pain. i know of no better writing on the subject of pain processing than that which has been done by Joseph W. Bean, and i have therefore asked for and received His permission to reproduce here His perspective on pain processing from His book, Leathersex: A Guide for the Curious Outsider and the Serious Player (Daedalus Publishing Company, 1994).

i can only add my comment that, for me, "pain" can function like a length of fiber-optic cable through which i can find myself transported into altered states of consciousness. Those states are the best "high" i have ever found and learned how to use. In reproducing Mr. Bean's chapter here, it is my hope that interested slaves can find for themselves the same experience with "pain," or, who knows, something beyond even that. And so,

with that, i give you Mister Joseph Bean who offers us these thoughts on Pain below.

" " "

Joseph Bean in His book, *LEATHERSEX*:

Pain is mysterious stuff, and everyone reacts differently to it. If five guys get more or less the same thump on the heel from the same overwound automatic door closer, one will glance behind himself and go on to his next appointment; another will wince, shrug, and limp a bit; another will need pain relief medication; another will take the day off from the office; and another will sue for millions (or threaten to do so), limping and complaining and even actually aching for days. If the same five guys see someone else in pain, (no it's not another countdown!), their reactions might range from smothering sympathy to the genuine belief that the only way to get over the pain is to ignore it and get on with what you were doing.

What is intolerable pain to one person is a cozily welcome midnight reminder of a hard-played afternoon football game to another. And yet, presented with the idea that there are people who seek pain, who get high on pain, and who get hard from pain, even the look-a'-my-bruises football player will usually react with disgust. In fact, if athletes could think of SM as sports, they'd understand the acceptance of pain, but they'd always want to know who was winning. If executives who are willing to stare at columns of tiny numerals till their heads are about to burst and their eyes are watering could think of SM as business, they'd understand the acceptance of pain, but they'd always want to know who was profiting from whom.

SM, though, is neither a sport nor a business (not as such, not usually), so it mystifies and disgusts. Not that they're more likely to understand, but it might be better to take the question of pain to a gardener rather than to athletes and businessmen. He or

she would understand the idea, if not the actuality quickly enough: Pain is the weed-word of sensation. Last year's carnations are unwanted when they push up among this year's tidy rows of pansies. They are weeds. They are plants not wanted in this place at this time. Just so, pain can be seen as a sensation that is not welcome at a particular time, coming in the way it does. But, just as a gardener might choose to accommodate or move the pesky carnations, a masochist is able to process and use sensations that others would dismiss as pain.

So, the eternal questions arise, the one that has to be asked at just about every SM demonstration-lecture: If a masochist gets hit by a car, does he enjoy it? No. It's as simple as that. No, a masochist does not enjoy being injured accidentally. His experience with pain may make him better able than most people to understand how badly injured he is, to know what kind of care he is likely to need, and even to bear the pain. None of which should suggest that an SM bottom wants, seeks, enjoys, or puts up with accidental injury any more than anyone else. That sort of sensory experience is a weed. It is pain.

SM bottoms learn very quickly what kinds of stimulation and sensation they do and don't want. They learn almost as quickly how to encourage Tops to give them the stimulation they want and to prevent Tops from providing sensations they want to avoid. (The grey areas between what a guy wants and what he wants to avoid are negotiable, more often than not.) What bottoms learn less quickly is how to process the intense sensation-okay, pain-so that they can bear more of it for a longer time, get more of the pleasure that makes pain-seeking attractive, and have a better shot at some of the better Tops (who will very likely want a guy who can take enough of a scene to get them off, too).

Processing pain, at least to a certain extent, is natural. If it were not, even a hangnail could bring the toughest bruiser to his knees (come on guys, you wouldn't want that for yourself so don't go wishing it on the big boys). For some people-boys more

than girls-an additional degree of pain processing is taught from a very early age, but not always in the healthiest way. Then there are the lucky few who, once they become involved in SM, intentionally continue their education in pain processing by noticing what works, and developing that; noticing what others do, and trying that; and by asking questions or taking classes to increase their pain-handling capabilities.

How a person goes about processing intense sensation into a tide of pleasure depends on what kind of person he is to begin with. Some people respond to pain with nothing short of "Oh, boy!" These are true masochists; processing pain is not an issue. What they need is to be told how to get more of the specific type of pain they want. Others react with "Oh, yeah?" These guys are going to fight for the Top position (even if it is an obviously foregone conclusion who will win the fight, and it isn't always). If they lose (was there ever any doubt?), these guys are going to "take it like men," which is a very rudimentary and fairly ineffective way of processing pain. In fact, a lot of men learn to give the impression that they are toughing it out like good little soldiers when, actually, they have learned and are using much more sophisticated pain processing methods.

Another initial reaction to pain in the playroom is "Oh, no!" This comes from people who, supposing they knew what they were getting into, need help. They need to learn by heart the path from whack to heaven, and it will be hard if they can't shed their oh-no attitude. And, finally, there are people who react to the prospect of pain with nothing heartier than "Oh, well." Chances are they will never be bothered to learn how to handle, use, and enjoy the ministrations of a good Top. Until they stop soaking up the hot SM energy and go back to the excitement of word-search puzzles, they will be yawning while one Top after another wears himself out at the other end of a whip or whatever.

How Pain is Handled

Strangely, the ways people process pain are often considered more personal than the most graphic details of their sex lives. Maybe the highly guarded privacy gathers around pain handling because processing pain seems to imply that the bottom "needs help" which he ought to be glad to manage without. Or, maybe the problem is simply that, because we don't often speak of it, we haven't developed a comfortable language in which to tell each other about our pain-processing successes and failures, methods and magic. Whatever the reason, most people prefer not to talk about the pain processing techniques they use or the unconscious processes they observe in themselves. Nonetheless, it is not difficult to describe a few ways to juggle pain while spinning it into pleasure.

Breath

With TV motherhood in graphic and perennial bloom, you don't need ever to have known a pregnant woman to know that they are told to "breathe, breathe, breathe" in order to cope with the pains of labor and giving birth. Why they should have to be told is another question since every little kid in the world seems to instinctively understand that huffing, puffing, and sucking deep breaths changes the way a smashed fingertip feels. Not surprisingly, breath is the most common vehicle for pain control in SM play, too.

Generally, the idea is to breathe out the pain, and breathe in a relaxed receptivity to the scene in progress. There is no point in asking whether this, or any pain processing method for that matter, is more imagination or medicine, visualization or self-delusion. The point is that it works. Engaging the palpable sense of bodily presence initiated by the introduction of the painful stimulation, the process is simple: locate the breath within the

body as a gatherer of the pain, deliver it to the lungs, and release pain and spent air together.

If for no other reason, this method is bound to be effective with early stages and low levels of pain just because it stands as a reminder to breathe and to breathe deeply. When we breathe deeply, we are doing a more effective job of heat exchanging between the surrounding environment and the interior of our bodies, and mild trauma is often greeted with a slightly elevated body temperature. Not that anything is explained away by that fact, but it may help the skeptic engage his imagination and put breath to work in SM.

Fantasy

Some people find that pain is managed when they submerge themselves in the right fantasy role. A person being flogged, for example, casts himself in the role of the Roman galley slave for whom the pain of a flogging (history be damned) is an everyday experience. Since it is nothing out of the ordinary, it is nothing all that disquieting. In the end, it is tolerated. Whether this path to bearing the pain closes some of the doors to pleasure is very debatable. Some guys claim that they don't notice when the role ceases to be used, or necessary. For them, then, role playing (even if no one else knows they are doing it) serves a purpose, very likely either keeping them occupied until the body begins to handle the pain in its own way, or acting as a cover for unconscious pain-processing methods they may not appreciate.

Heat, Light, and Color

Heat is naturally generated in the body by most methods of stimulation. Whether it is slapped with a paddle, scoured with an abrasive toy, pinched, stretched, or punctured, the body sends its investigative reporters (armies of blood cells) to the sight of

the trauma, and blood is the heat-carrier. So, it is not much of a leap to identify pain with heat. Just about everybody can do it, and that is the beginning of a rather simple method of pain processing.

To experience heat as light is also a relatively easy step. Even speaking scientifically, the distinction between what we ordinarily experience as heat and what we call light is a matter of perception as much as anything. Similarly, to assign a color designation to any experience of heat or light is well within the realm of normal imaginative capabilities. So, pain processing methods that work with heat can also be performed with light and color.

There are three distinct options available here, and combinations of two or three of them are not uncommon either. First, heat (which will stand for color and light as well at the moment) can be generalized. Just as a towel is less "wet" when the water in it has spread by capillary action over a large area of its fibers, pain is less intense when it is experienced over a larger area of the body. Some people find it very easy to recognize the pain of a single blow in a specific area, then to release the pain so it can spread over a larger area, perhaps even being driven over still larger areas with each successive blow. A good Top, recognizing that a bottom is having trouble dealing with the immediate pain will often stroke the reddened skin outward from the center, not to soothe per se, so much as to encourage the generalizing of the pain over a larger area. For this technique to work, the bottom needs nothing more than the intention that it should, and a modicum of imagination.

Next, the heat (light, color) can be drawn to the surface. This operation may require more imagination, and it seems to have less science in it than most, but it works for some people. Here the experience of pain as heat, for example, is pressed outward from within the body, leaving the heat on the surface. Superficial pain is, almost by definition, tolerable. That is the primary force behind the effectiveness of this method, and a certain

amount of its appeal comes from the fact that we have seen superficial injuries heal all our lives, but we retain (and should!) a fear of internal injury. In fact, if a pain is only skin deep, how could anyone possibly find it intolerable, especially if managing that pain means that the scene goes on (with a man who happens to be hot enough to have gotten the scene going in the first place)?

Heat, light, and-as a kind of light-color, can also be radiated. In fact, they actually are radiated from the body in their various ways all the time. Where generalizing spread the transformed pain around the body, and superficializing brought it out like a shell encasing the body, radiating expels the pain. There is, of course, a still higher degree of imaginative capability called for here, but it is not beyond the sort of imagination required for most formal meditations. Whether it is sensed as heat, light, or a defined color, the pain can be radiated outward from the source-however superficial or deep within the body. This not only reduces the experience of the pain as pain, but it tends to encourage the experience of joy in the leathersex scene, and to connect leathersex with the most effortless kind of letting go, which multiplies the opportunities for SM joy.

Storage

A lot of people, especially novices, have trouble identifying pain with anything as welcome as heat, light, or color; they can't deal with fantasy roles, or let go enough to use them; and they find their breath more often pushing them toward weed-pain than lifting them away from it. And yet, they are getting something they "know" they want. They wonder if they really want it, but keep coming back in search of more of what is more or less the same thing. Sadly, they also often blame their Tops for not teaching them how to cope, or for not "doing it so it feels good." For these people, one method of pain processing that is almost always accessible is this; store the energy of the pain in or near

the site where it is being originated, and let it build up without resisting it. Give your attention to retaining full awareness of the sensation and of the fact that it is exactly what you bargained for, holding on to it as long as possible. Then, having warned your Top of this moment before the scene began, you can signal (perhaps with a safe word) that it is time to release the stored up energy. Release it by shuddering, if that comes naturally, shaking if you need to, screaming, squealing, wriggling, or whatever it takes, but remain aware that this is not meant to be a mad scene, just a complete release of stored energy.

Minor variations on this technique are obvious. Bottoms who scream and squeal, wriggle and shudder all through a scene without any encouragement are evidently performing energy releases all the time. This may be distressing for the Top. It may be distracting for other players in the room. It may even be destructive of the entire leathersex atmosphere. Or not. It depends on the nature of the release activity, the intensity of it, and the attitude of the Top and others present. But the bad thing is that it is probably stealing all the more intense experiences from the bottom. Releasing your pain-delivered energy, stroke by stroke as it is received, is like spending your money dollar by dollar as it is earned: You never get to use it to buy anything big enough to wish for.

There are endless possible combinations of these pain processing techniques, and countless other methods as well, but the idea is to process the sensation intentionally, engaging your attention. When you do that, you collect a kind of sensual dividend on the processed energy. The very act of attending to (or even attempting) the processing of sensation has soothing effects on the mind and quiets fearful voices in the head. It encourages good habits of breathing and centered presence, drawing you into the scene, opening you to its possibilities rather than letting you stew on its unlikely side effects.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of pain processing,

apart from its involvement in the spiritual aspect of leathersex, is that it gives the bottom the freedom to become a fully contributing partner in the scene. A guy whose only concern is bearing the pain, or when and how to stop it, is not cooperating. He's just wearing down the Top. The same guy in the same scene, when he's engaged in handling the sensations for himself, gets a clearer picture of what is being done to and for him. He has more consciousness free to communicate with the Top, instead of relying on the Top to read his mind (although good Tops do seem to be able to do this). He has liberty where he imagined limits, permitting a longer, more intense, and more satisfying scene for both parties.

(From *LEATHERSEX*, by Joseph Bean, Daedalus Publishing Company, Los Angeles, 1994)

Written October 17, 2001---Your birthday

Dearest Sir,

Happy Birthday! (Well, yes....i know You're holding this a few months late.) How is it possible that we have lived this long? It must be Living Dangerously, is all i can guess....either that, or the Leather Gods (please forgive me) take some special, cruel delight in watching us cope with the realities of a few more gray hairs every year.

Anyway, today it feels important to tell You that i bless the day we met, and will continue to do so until i've taken my last breath. Your endless gifts to me bespoke a generosity of spirit that i'd never before been confronted with, and will be surprised to encounter ever again. Quite simply, You are the kindest Man i have ever known. As i review my life, our time together was a Landmark Event for me....life changing. i knew it at the time, and i know it still. i will never be the same.

my birthday wish for You this year is that Happiness finds You again soon, just as it found us in 1994.... comets intersected....a portal to destinations beyond time and space opened....the sum, so much greater than our two parts.

You now hold in Your hands the fulfillment of an order given long ago. "Write it down and get it published.", You said.

It is done.

Eternal love,

Your grateful, once upon a time slave

Afterword

MASTERCRAFT: A DIALOGUE WITH GUY BALDWIN'S SlaveCraft

By
Patrick Califia, M.A.

The Attraction of Master/Slave Relationships

I'd like to begin with a question posed on the Internet mailing list gl-asb in 1994 or thereabouts by david stein (gorgik@aol.com). To paraphrase, he wondered why the Master/slave fantasy remained such a potent aspect of S/M pornography and was a treasured goal for so many submissives. He commented that of all the ways to run an S/M relationship, this surely had to be one of the most difficult. As a long-time member of the gay men's leather community, he said he had rarely, if ever, seen a successful, long-term Master/slave relationship. Why, then, did bottoms continue to pine for this situation, and why did it enjoy a largely unexamined reputation as the ultimate S/M "trip"?1

Part of my answer to this question comes from my observations about the things we believe about all relationships in this culture. In the West, romance is seen as a fatal and fated attraction between opposites, an ecstatic and bittersweet drive toward a union that cannot endure. And yet romance is also supposed to be the basis for marriage and other long-term commitments. There's a dearth of discourse about how couples are supposed to make the transition from intense rapport and bliss to the everydayness of domestic life. Many people feel cheated when pas-

sionate love, which cannot be sustained at its peak, subsides into a more reliable but less intoxicating form of affection. Mere compatibility is not enough to slow the escalating divorce rate because alluring and desperate romantic love is supposed to separate the life that is worthwhile from the life that is not worth living. The myth of romance tells us that true love only blossoms when people cannot or should not have each other, when they do not have enough in common to create an ordinary and contented life.

S/M is nothing if not romantic. The binary, polarized roles of top and bottom offer many permutations other than the traditional vanilla one of boy-meets-girl. I believe the complex rules and customs that have been erected like a thorny hedge about the Master/slave relationship are a defense, an attempt to create so much opposition and (yes) suffering that love, that most contrary and prickly yet sweet-scented bush, will never cease to thrive.

The reams and reams of S/M pornography about erotic slavery reveal another unconscious and perfectly understandable wish: The desire to live in a world where Masters and slaves need not conceal their proclivities, so that their passion is recognized or validated by others. This becomes clear when you realize how frequently the literature of Master/slave relationships takes the reader into a world or at least a subculture populated by peers who are knowledgeable about this dynamic, qualified to evaluate the performance of other Masters and slaves, and take this connection for granted as one of the normal variations of the human heart and libido. O has the Chateau-cum-brothel; Mr. Benson has his fraternity of leather tops; John Willie painted the Island of the Pony-girls; the destiny of Mason Powell's luckless conscientious objector is relentlessly refined in the Brig; Beauty is sent to the Palace; Tyre presides over the Calyx of Isis.

Baldwin himself continues this tradition here in *SlaveCraft* when he argues that slave training is best accom-

plished when novice players are paired with those who are more experienced. He goes on to say:

"... this is part of an argument for the multiple consensual ownership of tiered slaves in one household. It also argues for the development of a strong Master/slave community in which novices have the chance to see well-developed submissives at work in positive settings, both erotic and non-erotic." (p. 46)

If Gorgik is correct about the high failure rate for Master/slave relationships (and it's hard to know, given the fact that there are many BDSM couples who don't participate in the public leather community), perhaps it's not due to individual shortcomings or a flawed paradigm. Perhaps it's because both Master and slave are striving to accomplish a worthwhile but very difficult rapport in the absence of real-world models, guidance, support, advisers, or peers.

On a more personal level, I know that I keep looking for the perfect slave because when I don't have a piece of properly-collared property, I feel like shit - depressed, out of focus, bored to tears. My boots get (and stay) dusty, an apt metaphor for what happens to abilities or talents that we do not use. I am primarily a sadist, but I have a strong proprietary streak. If I find somebody who captures my imagination on a reliable basis, who is strong enough to take the agony that I love to dish out, somebody I want to slowly take apart and then reconstruct, it is natural for me to claim that person and keep them next to me, dedicated most of the time to my exclusive use.

I tend to keep my property on a very long leash. To the casual observer, it may sometimes seem that slavery is so far in the background that it's nonexistent, if it weren't for the 24-7 presence of a locked sterling silver collar. I don't like carting an unwieldy title about with me outside of a session. If a Master is worth his salt, his good reputation will be established by what

comes out of other people's mouths, not his own. But I care about the well being of my slave, so I want veto power over certain aspects of his or her life. If I am going to justify having power over another person, I have to believe that I am, at least in some cases, a better judge of what is good for them than they are themselves. On those occasions when I do choose to exercise my prerogatives as an Owner, I want absolute and unquestioning acquiescence.

I also expect a certain level of respect and deference in my S/M relationships. Most days, a little sass will entertain me; defiance, however, is a poor sort of joke. My property is expected to be intelligent enough to figure out where the line is between remaining in my service or being ousted. He or she is thus faced with the challenge of exercising a certain amount of freedom, but never taking that for granted or becoming overweening. Because I am generous and usually pretty reasonable, I do not often demand that a slave give my requests priority over their other activities, but when I do express that desire, it had better be put ahead of all else, no matter how offhandedly it is mentioned.

Unfortunately, the test of obedience is apparently a hard one to pass. Baldwin puts his finger right on the distinction between erotic slavery and other sorts of S/M relationships or scenes when he says:

"The chief difference between [slaves and bottoms] is the orientation from which each pursues his own satisfaction. Bottoms have appetites that are their own whereas slaves' needs become the same as those of the Master. A bottom will sometimes function like a slave when the Master's appetites and the bottom's appetites accidentally happen to match up smoothly." (P. 56)

While a slave certainly has the same right that any other bottom does to check out a potential Master or top, and state what their

preferences or limits might be, the bottom retains the responsibility for continuing to monitor how well their own needs are being met and their limits observed. Safewords and other devices have become community institutions for allowing ongoing communication about such matters throughout the course of a scene.

The process of entering an erotic slave relationship is every bit as consensual as negotiating a scene, but it is a very different experience. The key difference, I believe, is that at a certain point the slave must turn himself or herself over to the Owner, Master, or Mistress. There must be a moment of surrender or giving up. The Master must take what is his, seize both the flesh and the soul it houses, and the slave must cede.

From that point on, it becomes the proprietary party's responsibility to monitor the slave's well being, the Master or Mistress's option to meet or deny a need of the slave's. The slave's responsibility is to monitor his or her state of surrender and do whatever emotional work is necessary to keep the commitment to obey. The nature of the Master/slave relationship makes it absolutely crucial for both parties to check each other out thoroughly before embarking on this journey together, more so than any other sort of sadomasochistic power exchange.

Baldwin beautifully sums up how this looks from the slave's point of view.

"i have come to believe that obedience is the very spirit of slavery; it is the special charisma of slave creatures. Obedience is the structural steel of our slave identity, and the spine of a slave's conviction. Obedience alone determines what is right and what is wrong. It frees a slave to be what only a slave can be---one whose will has been replaced by that of another. Obedience is usually the single most important concern of a slave, and in this, it frees us from all others. It is the overarching principle through which right and wrong is assessed by us, and by those we serve." (p. 80)

And, again:

"It is only the slave's obedience that enables a Master to control and therefore protect a slave against the most damaging threat possible, the slave's thoughts." (pp. 81-82)

Of course, Baldwin does not have as much to say in *SlaveCraft* about the protective aura that a fitting slave casts about the Master's existence. A good slave may take on the chore of polishing my boots, maintaining my leather, and helping my household to run more smoothly. But their prime function is to keep me on an even keel. I function better as a top and in all other areas of my life when I know I have a reliable outlet for my sadistic and domineering impulses, a lock that matches my key. The bottom's obedience and adoration helps me to function in a world where I'm seen as a freak (at best) and an outlaw (by far too many). My slave values those aspects of my personality and sexuality that are despised in the larger world. Their companionship is my antidote to loneliness, homophobia, and existential angst. When I am responsible for the well being of another person, and I do a good job of providing for them, my own life is enhanced as well.

Beginning Your Search

What advice, then, can I offer to would-be slaves and Masters who want to find their complement? First of all, I cannot emphasize too much that you should use every ounce of common sense that you possess. Of those who are afraid to let the slave within pursue his desire, Baldwin says:

"Since most of the things that we fear when moving toward slavery arise out of the hurricane of fears in our own minds, it can be

very helpful to get grounded again in reality. Spend some time searching out Master/slave teams and try to find out how our lives really work. The more you do this, the more you are likely to find that many of the fears have no basis in reality. To begin with, the world is a less dangerous place than you imagine. [N.B.: Emphasis is mine.] Many who pursue slavery do so without serious trouble in our lives. we have real jobs, have real families, play cards, go to movies, attend funerals, shop for cat food, and think about a new car from time to time." (p. 120)

I think I get what Baldwin is driving at here. He is saying that most of the personality changes that bottoms fear when they contemplate finding out just how far they want to go under, are chimeras. But I'd like to point out that even a single encounter with a truly dangerous person can have devastating, life-long consequences. The Master/slave fantasy brings out the worst as well as the best in our community. Several years ago, I was involved in a behind-the-scenes campaign to get a national fetish magazine to stop running advertising for a top who said he wanted live-in slaves to work on his farm. Guys would show up planning to stay for one or two weeks, but he simply refused to let them leave. Of course none of his victims were willing to file a complaint with the local police department.

Nowadays, it's common for many of us to find partners via personal ads in magazines or on the Internet. Just be aware that a stranger can pretend to be anyone they like in an ad or a chat room. Holding up a facade during a conversation is much easier than keeping agreements made over time in a face-to-face relationship. Anybody can scan a photo that looks like your ideal owner and send it to you, claiming it's their own portrait. So don't agree to make your first rendezvous with an unknown individual in an isolated location. In fact, your first meeting should not include any attempt to play.

Check a new partner's references out with community

members whose judgment you trust. If possible, schedule your first scene at a party. When you meet people at conferences or contests out of town, be aware that many of us behave a little differently when we are on vacation, away from the normal responsibilities of our hometowns. You need to know more about someone than you're going to find out in one hot scene to justify moving across country to be with them.

These precautions apply to Masters as well as slaves. I've heard from more than one top who was horrified to find himself or herself the object of harassment, stalking, deception, theft, character assassination, or assault. Most leather people tend to assume that emotional and physical abuse is perpetrated by tops who've let their egos get out of control. But the truth is that bottoms can feel a lot of shame about their desires, and some desperation about getting such deep needs met. What seems like a small disappointment or setback to the top can be so deeply injuring to such a person that it sets off a firestorm of betrayal and rage. There are also ego-dystonic bottoms whose lust compels them to seek out a session. But once that desire has been sated, the memory of the scene is so humiliating or unacceptable that the bottom is driven to seek some sort of compensation or vengeance.

The majority of people you will meet along this Way are intelligent, honest, and ethical. But there are dangerous people who are very good at camouflaging themselves. There are also lots of opportunities for heartbreak if you allow yourself to become vulnerable or attached to another person before you've really checked out their trustworthiness or compatibility. When in doubt, slow down. If you are never in doubt, slow way, way down.

Be aware that there are many, many different types of

tops and bottoms - and many different kinds of S/M relationships. Try to figure out which of the labels below is the best fit for you. (Of course, these lists are not complete, and hybrids do exist.) Don't assume that you will stay the same type over the entire course of your lifetime.

It's also worth mentioning that there are roles that can be played in S/M scenes that cannot properly be categorized as purely top or bottom. Some players who are having trouble finding their niche in the scene might explore the possibility that they are meant to be a junior S (who serves the primary top, and must thus be seen as someone who is subservient, at least to the extent that they are in training) or a middle (who serves as the top's extra pair of hands and ministers to the bottom without being an underling in the S/M hierarchy). The corollary of the junior S is the "first girl" (or "first boy"), the slave who holds seniority or performs a supervisory function over a group of property. To the extent that the first slave is given the right to punish or correct transgressions against the Master's standards, their role is flavored with dominance.

And let us not omit the audience or witness, whose presence affirms the reality of what transpires betwixt scene participants and intensifies it. I have often said that it is the top's job to assign a meaning to the acts visited upon the body and psyche of the bottom; it is the witness or audience's function to confirm and remember the significance of the rite.

A Bestiary of Bottoms

Brats

Submissives

Masochists

Sex slaves

Fetishists

Body Worshippers (this may be a subcategory of fetish)

Victims (includes the guilty who desire punishment, the penitents, as well as the prisoners who seek immobilization or sensory deprivation)

Non-Humans (animals and furniture, primarily)

Crossgenderists

Clients

Trance/endorphin whores

Ritualists (ball dancers, kavandi bearers) seeking a connection with divinity or an experience of the Otherworld

Girls/Boys

Voyeurs

The Proud

The Tanist

A Lexicon of Tops

Sadists

Owner

Trainers

God/desses

Jailers

Torturers

Priest/esses

Ka-see-kas or other conductor/composer of symphony of sensations

Fetishists (cigar/boot/corset, etc.)

Daddies/Mommies

Raconteurs or exhibitionists

Brutes (subtypes include the fag-bashing bit of rough trade, the pimp, and the blue collar butch dyke)

The body part or genital that demands worship

People new to this realm often feel that they must do things a certain way in order to be recognized as serious or authentic players. Do not fall into the trap of assuming that you must become a Master in charge over a slave (or vice versa) in order to achieve some sort of "you belong here" status.

There are many different ways to manage an erotic exchange of power. It is better to experiment and find the type of S/M relationship that best meets your needs and the needs of your partner than it is to shoehorn your desires into some sort of real or perceived community standard. A bottom who is no end of trouble in an ongoing relationship can give you a lot of pleasure if you only see them occasionally when you are in a certain sort of mood. Conversely, there are bottoms who do not function well on a scene-by-scene basis, who will bloom and reveal their full potential only when they have the security of a full-time overseer. The list of relationship options below is hardly exhaustive, but should provide food for thought.

Types of S/M Relationships

Scene-by-scene
Incarceration
Mastery/Ownership
Therapeutic²
Parental
Paid
Peer
Facilitative
Nurturing
Physical sensation only; no head-games
Worshipful (in either direction)
Punishment
Destruction
Training
Humiliation/Degradation

Don't be too hard on yourself if you are bewildered by these options and can't seem to figure out where you fit in. Sometimes it takes a good bit of experimentation to know: (a) what works for you as a fantasy, and (b) what works for you in reality. But if you are experimenting, it's only fair to let your partner know that, so he or she can be prepared if the outcome tells you that you must abandon one particular trail, hike back to your starting point, and try another way to get to the green valley.

While it's important to communicate whatever information you have about what works and doesn't work for you in an S/M scene or relationship style, the spirit in which these details are received has a lot to do with whether you'll have a good time or be disappointed. "Yes", "no", and "maybe" lists can (and probably should) change over time. But both parties must have a basically respectful attitude toward one another and toward themselves for S/M to be a positive experience.

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I'm not sure that I agree with the dictum that one should never play while one is angry; a little irritation can add a lot of spice to a dominant's rant. But you certainly should not embark on power-exchange sex if you are bogged down by self-hatred or feel contempt for your opposite number. While a slave may be treated with disdain or even humiliated if this is part of the agreed-upon terrain for the relationship to occupy, even these emotions must be consciously administered and titrated in a spirit of compassion, generosity, and positive regard. Unfortunately, what Baldwin says is true:

"If a Master has the power to forbid a slave to smoke, then surely He also has the power to make a slave start smoking." (p. 112)

But you surely do not want to find yourself bound to a

dominant who wouldn't see anything wrong with mandating self-harm. Nor should a Master accept the reins of someone who has so little self-regard. Unfortunately, there are both Masters and slaves who see the abuse of power as evidence that their ownership is real. Because the Master/slave dynamic gives the dominant party so much latitude, it is a very real test of character.

Unquestioned power does indeed corrupt.

Is This "The One"?

When a bottom is trying to assess a potential Master, looks obviously enter into the picture, as they always do when sexual attraction is the issue. But the fact that your owner-to-be is a tall blonde with creamy cleavage or a body-builder with the biggest dick you've ever seen is not going to get you through those moments of resentment or doubt that are inevitable in any role-based relationship. You are going to need somebody with empathy who is nevertheless able to make and enforce the rules that define your fealty. If you want to know whether your top will have staying power or not, and whether he or she has the power to function as a strong, safe container for your slavery, character is more important than looks.

A useful question to ask is: What is the top's authority based on? What makes this person worthy to receive service and obedience? Be wary of dominants whose claim to fame is based solely on their physiques or their popularity. Do you have reason to believe this is a good person? Do you trust their sense of right and wrong? Do you think they have the capability to make good decisions about your quality of life? Are they able to see you as an individual, not as a character out of a Larry Townsend novel or a story by Laura Antoniou? Do they have good anger management skills, or do they feel fine about using you as a scapegoat?

(This is not a bad question for a top to ask about a new bottom, either.)

On one of those Saturday nights when you haven't been able to get a date, it pays to sit with a blank sheet of paper or a new document on your personal computer and spell out an answer to this question: What are the signifiers of topdom to you?

In other words, what characteristics should a Master or Owner possess in order to trip your trigger and make you go under? Be specific. Then go back over your list and sort it, placing the most important items first. When you are considering entering into a contract with a new dominant, make a photocopy of this list and tick off the number of criteria that he or she meets. If you don't have 50% or more of the items checked off, chances are this situation is not workable.

The top should also ask themselves what they are looking for in a slave. What exactly do you want your slave to do for you? If you simply want someone who can be gagged and tied to your coffee table so you can rest your boots on them, that opens the field up quite a bit. Be specific. If you want someone to balance the checkbook, shop for or cook food, or drive you around, you obviously need to interview potential candidates about these abilities.

Don't be in too big a hurry to remove a slave candidate from their milieu. The boy who dazzled you on the first date should be able to keep getting your dick hard while you take the time to check out his spending habits and other indices of fiscal responsibility, neatness or lack thereof, self-care, and idiosyncratic qualities, like politics or taste in music, which can affect your experience while he's around.

It doesn't hurt to find out who else your candidate has played with, and what happened in those connections. Do other people he or she has served speak well of that person? Even if you are not very social, it's a good idea to evaluate your candi-

date's network, just to get a sense of how he behaves around people he is close to, and how good he is at upholding his commitments to them. A slave who is isolated, has a messy apartment, can't keep a job, won't remember to take his medication, has a drawer full of unpaid parking tickets, cancels dinner or movie plans with friends at the last minute, never finished his college degree, lies about his history, smokes too much pot, etc., is not going to magically reform and become some other kind of person just because you collar him or her.

Also think about what kinds of people you like to be around, and what personality types drive you crazy. How much time do you realistically have to spend with your slave? Do you want someone experienced or a novice you can train to your own specifications from the get-go? How smart do you want him or her to be? How verbal? What signifies submission to you (i.e., what characteristics should a bottom possess to catch your interest and turn you on)? Do you like a certain amount of independence, sassiness, or sarcasm, or will that be too provocative and troublesome?

There are also some practical considerations. Where and how will your slave sleep, eat, clean, relieve itself? What mode of dress should he or she adopt? Do you want the slave to wear a badge of servitude? Would that include any body modifications? Who is going to be responsible for your slave's health insurance and living expenses? How do you want your slave to deal with relationships which existed prior to your arrival on the scene?

I strongly encourage Masters and slaves who are new to each other to draw up some kind of written agreement. This is usually a turn-on to put together. It can also be invaluable if conflicts arise later on. It's especially important to specify when and how often the two parties will meet. A new slave contract should be short-term. A month is a surprisingly long amount of time.

During this trial period, the Master should test the slave to determine if this is a good match. (Be aware that there is a dif-

ference between testing someone and setting them up to fail.) I am especially fond of open-ended "tests" that have no right answer. I may create a dilemma for the slave and stand by to see how they will resolve it simply because I want to see what he or she will do.

I suggest that if you want to get an intimate picture of your slave's erotic hot buttons, find out what he or she reads or looks at for jerk-off material. Baldwin says:

"For those of us who are seriously interested in traveling in person - rather than vicariously - in those thickest regions of the dominant/submissive forests, the large fiction library is frequently useless at best and harmful at worst." (p. 29)

Perhaps I'm a little miffed by this statement simply because I've written so much S/M fiction, and I'd hate to think it was useless or harmful to real-life practitioners looking for entertainment or information about the scene. Of course the situations or characters depicted in fiction are often impossible to find in the here-and-now, and fictional bodies can sustain more harsh treatment than real human beings. But S/M fiction can serve as a valuable record of our community's mores, dreams, and difficulties.

I think it's indisputably true that there's no better way to find out where the shortcuts and detours are to another person's arousal than to survey their favorite porn. Nothing induces submission more reliably than a stimulus the slave himself has constantly reinforced by masturbating to it. I also recommend requiring the slave to engage in self-pleasuring behavior in the presence of the Owner. This dramatically underscores their loss of autonomy and privacy. If you ever care to give your slave an orgasm, this is a dignified way to get some coaching on his or her erogenous zones.

In the end, the coming-together of Master and slave probably has more to do with vows taken in childhood, the

unconscious, our intuition, and senses we don't often heed (like the sense of smell) than it does the rational mind. So perhaps all these caveats are issued in vain. The willingness to attempt to be someone's slave, even when your common sense tells you it's a mistake, is also affected by a perceived shortage of Masters. Only you can say if it is better to embark upon such an experiment or put up with a little more frustration and keep the faith with your own "bottom line," as it were.

Maintenance of the Long-term Master/slave Relationship

A whole volume could be written on this topic alone. I can do no more in these few pages than sketch an outline of some of the factors that you should consider. Baldwin's book is an invaluable resource for bottoms facing the chore of keeping their slavery in good working order. By singling out the principal virtues of slaves (identity, obedience, transparency, humility, and using or processing pain) and creating meditations to bring them more clearly into focus, Baldwin has created a wonderful set of tools for the slave who wants to keep on target.

In one of the more brilliant passages in *SlaveCraft*, Baldwin takes the amazing leap of concluding that slavery is, first and foremost, about the relationship the slave desires to have with himself.

"Slavery is an agreement i make, first with myself. i decide that decisions about my behavior will be placed under the control of someone else. i make this decision because i have learned that when someone else has control of my behavior, my mind experiences a transformation during which it is open to being flooded with an ecstatic bliss that i can't get any other way." (p. 55)

The concept of using the "slave within" as an adviser or mentor

is another brilliant invention.

"And like all fine slaves, when i asked him questions, he gave me answers. Sometimes it took me a while to understand the answers, so i had to learn to listen to him very carefully through the nearly ever-present emotional noise, like radio static, the sort of mental interference that always seems to emanate from life, and which clutters all our minds. he is unwilling, perhaps even unable, to shout about what he knows - he has taught me that slaves do not shout unless ordered to do so by their Masters. So i have had to learn to turn off the static of life to pay closer attention to him." (p. 52)

Like Baldwin's Slave Within, I believe every top could benefit from dialogue with an internalized image of the Master I May Become. If you are a kind and empathic person, the discovery that you are sexually excited by restraining another person, spanking them, or ordering them about can be upsetting. If you let yourself go a little way down that road and discover that you want to have a naked slave dusting your apartment while wearing some genital jewelry with your initials on them, the gate of fear can slam down in a hurry, cutting you off from this pleasant future.

Any ethical person who discovers they have a streak of erotic dominance or sadism is usually frightened by these feelings and deeply concerned about where they might lead. The basic fear is, I think, one of going too far and either hurting other people in ways they do not enjoy, or becoming a sort of monster who is oblivious to the boundaries of civilization. Our own community does not necessarily help us assess these fears or conquer them. Master/slave relationships are the object of envy, but the majority of people in the BDSM community probably feel a 24-7 proprietary relationship is overkill.

Given these facts, it's often more helpful to turn within.

Instructions follow.

Constructing the Master Within

Pick a time when you won't be interrupted, and you have a few hours to yourself. Make sure it's a time when you'll have a reasonable amount of energy and be clear-headed. Turn off any devices that the outside world might use to communicate with you. Make sure you won't be distracted by household pets, dripping faucets, or boiling teakettles. If the room is too hot or too cold, do your best to adjust the temperature. Sit in a comfortable chair with both of your feet solidly on the floor, or stretch out on your back on a firm, supportive surface. Close your eyes. A sleep shade is sometimes helpful to more completely screen out the light. (Of course, I would never suggest that you wear a hood or a blindfold.) Breathe in through your mouth and out through your nose. Take deep, even breaths at a comfortable pace. As you breathe in, imagine that you are taking in a sense of calm and relaxation. As you breathe out, release any annoyance or discomfort that might keep you from being focused on the here-and-now.

When you feel that you've reached a point of clarity, make a mental statement about what you need. You might say to yourself: "I need a more experienced, wiser top who can serve as my mentor and guide me so that my relationship with myself and others will be more satisfying." Or perhaps you would wish, "Let me meet and speak with the kind of Master that I will become if I am able to achieve my ideal."

Once you've stated your intentions, imagine yourself taking a walk or using some other mode of travel to go to a place where you are likely to meet this person. You may find yourself riding a motorcycle, swimming, sitting in a stagecoach, or climbing a tree. Be open to whatever you see, and stick with it, visualizing details about the journey. Your experience will be more vivid if

you try to capture not only the way it looks, but also the way it sounds and smells. Don't forget your senses of taste and touch, as well. Remember that you can go to any place in human history, or to the future, or to realms where mortals do not dwell. Usually people experience a moment of blankness, but don't quit at that point. Be patient. A small detail will reveal itself - a chair, a door, the smell of a particular perfume, the sound of waves. If you focus on that detail, the entire setting will gradually unfold.

Remind yourself of your wish. Sometimes the person you are looking for will immediately take your hand and introduce themselves. Sometimes you will have to begin by deliberately trying to see just a part of them. I suggest beginning at the feet and working your way up. It's possible that your guide will be the same gender and sexual orientation as you are; it's also possible that they will be different. Sometimes, you will encounter an animal, element, force of nature, or a mythological being. Once you can see who or what has come to meet you, politely introduce yourself and restate what you are looking for. Ask if they are the person you are seeking. If they say yes, ask if they have time to speak with you. If they agree, you can lay out your current dilemma. Listen carefully to what you're told. When you're finished, ask if there is anything you can do for your mentor. Again, pay close attention. If you've found this encounter helpful, request permission to visit again. Then offer thanks and say goodbye.

Reverse the journey that you made before. Allow your attention to come back to your deep, even breathing and your body. Keep your eyes closed until you feel ready to come back to the room. When you are back, take a moment to jot down what you experienced and the information you were given.

Whether the above exercise is helpful for you or not, it makes sense to seek out guides or mentors in the real world as well. Cultivate a relationship with others in the community

whose judgment you trust. Don't assume that the only source of useful information will be another top. And don't assume that people have to play exactly the way you are trying to play to be able to offer helpful suggestions or support. Fortunately, we also have access to one another on-line these days, and many of us who feel pretty isolated in our hometowns can still find kindred spirits via keyboard and modem.

One of the easiest ways for humans to learn is to model their behavior after someone who is doing well what we'd also like to be able to do. When you are stuck, it's often helpful to ask yourself, "What would Master Frick do in this situation?" or "What would an ideal Owner do next?"

I've frequently said that too many tops are co-dependents. (This comment hardly ever gets the big laugh that I think it deserves. I guess you can still tread on people's toes, even if they're wearing steel-toed boots.) My observation is that getting burned out and overwhelmed by the bottom's needs and desires is a major occupational hazard for any top. This becomes especially dangerous in a Master/slave relationship, which requires more attention and more maintenance.

When I try to think about what virtues a top should possess, I come up with qualities like honesty, consistency, justice, creativity, intuition, decisiveness, the ability to bestow comfort, sensuality, stewardship/proprietaryness, humor, and humility. I frequently ask slaves of mine to write book reports about volumes I think they need to read, or require other writing assignments. It seems to me that most tops could benefit from keeping a journal in which they record their thoughts about these qualities, and create rituals or meditations to find their center once more.

Since this isn't a book about how to be a good Owner, just a commentary on someone else's book about how to be a good slave, I won't try to come up with meditations on each of the Virtues of the Good Master. But the sample below may help you

to come up with your own rituals for refreshing these qualities in yourself.

A Meditation on Honesty

My slave relies on me for accurate information about my needs and wants. If I am not centered, how can I hope to keep my slave grounded and content? In order to come to my own center, I have to own and understand myself. The foundation of my dominance is my relationship with myself. I need to go back to my beginning. Why did I first think that this was the path for me?

Has my understanding of myself changed since that beginning? If it has, how? If it has not, why not?

What do I need to be happy? What do I need to feel desire? What do I need to achieve gratification?

What are my disappointments and resentments with myself? With others? Something must be done about this. What can I do?

What do I lack? Why?

Have I reached a point in my life where this is not the right path for me to take? If my answer is yes, where can I find the courage to pursue the correct way? If my answer is no, what can I use to remind myself of this choice?

What stops me from seeing myself clearly? What prevents me from sharing this vision with others?

What stops me from seeing others clearly? What prevents me from taking action based on that information?

Am I ready to stop punishing myself for the things in my life that I cannot control?

Am I willing to hold the kind of power that will make me happy?

Have I reached a point in my life where this is not the right path for me to take? If my answer is yes, where can I find the courage to pursue the correct way? If my answer is no, what can I use to remind myself of this choice?

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The picture that bad S/M porn paints of the Master or Mistress's life is two-dimensional and rosy. But being a real-life dominant is not all about lounging on the couch in a negligee while you get your feet massaged and eat the perfect chocolate mousse your slave whipped up, nor is it all about being wheeled effortlessly around town in your pony cart, drawn by a perfectly-matched set of blond and shapely beasts of burden, each wearing ears, bits and bridles, and tails attached to oversized butt plugs. Some of the walls that Masters and Mistresses commonly hit are described in the paragraphs that follow.

It can be difficult to negotiate the proper amount of distance between Master and slave. Sometimes, especially with a live-in slave, the Owner may feel that they have little privacy. If you start to feel like a hostage in your own domicile, or wonder when you can have any down time without disillusioning or disappointing your slave, that's an important danger signal. My personal opinion (no matter how many times I've tried to do it) is that it's very difficult to preserve one's mystique as a dominant when the slave shares your living quarters. There are other problems with living together. An ill-trained or resentful slave can offer constant provocation, which can make it difficult to get on with the business of one's own life. Even owning a well-trained

and pleasant slave can seem like a crushing responsibility on a day when you have a cold, need to look for a new job, or are just out of sorts. And slaves, no matter how docile, do test their Masters to see if the fence will hold.

Like any relationship, a Master/slave connection can become rote, falling into such a predictable domestic routine that there is boredom. While your slave may give you an excellent massage when ordered to do so, it's possible to feel touch-deprived, to miss the spontaneous embraces or caresses that peers offer one another. If you do not know others who would understand or approve of the type of relationship you have, isolation can result. Dealing with the stigma placed on an intense S/M relationship is usually the top's responsibility, but sometimes there is little that one individual can do to shift the burden of such widespread distaste and disapproval. This can make some Masters feel as if they have condemned their beloved slave to living as an out-cast, denied the benefits and privileges that people in vanilla heterosexual relationships receive.

Your slave is, ideally at least, someone you enjoy an intimate relationship with, but there are things people expect to get from lovers or peers that it can be a strain for a slave to provide. A Master may understandably be reluctant to reveal their personal problems to a slave, which fosters loneliness on the part of the Master. Jealousy (on the part of Master or slave) can be a problem even in a strict role-based relationship.

Also, because of the perceived shortage of tops, there's pressure for anyone who is willing to be a Master to take on additional submissives, perhaps more than one person can adequately contain. Masters (and other tops) always run the risk of having too little empathy, or too much. An excessive focus on the slave's desires can lead to getting out of touch with your own fantasies. Over time, you may find that the deference given to you by your slave creates an unattractive sort of pride or arrogance in you that leads you to expect similar concessions will be made by people

who are not your property.³

The next section presents a few suggestions for getting past some of these obstacles.

Recalibration of S/M Relationships

Baldwin does an excellent job of discussing many ways that a slave can recalibrate his slavery. This internal housekeeping is important. But I think it's also important for the Master to clarify his or her own standards and priorities, from time to time, and rehearse these with the slave, offering an evaluation of the property's performance and setting up clear goals for improving any deficits. The wise Master will recognize that training is an on-going process, enduring as long as the slave's contract runs.⁴

It is here that Baldwin's views differ most widely from my own. Several times in *SlaveCraft*, he states that Masters and slaves are different species, and Masters are rarely inclined (or able) to train their slaves. But I should let him put this in his own words:

“The traditional slave-training myth asserts that:

“Any self-proclaimed Master can teach a slave all he needs to know about surrender.”

... there is a common belief that since many kinky people switch back and forth across the Master/slave role boundary, the best teacher a slave could have is a good Dominant who also has enjoyed submission. It has become my opinion that this is ... probably rarely true. Switching is fine for those who enjoy it and do so by honest desire rather than because of circumstance, so what follows is not intended to be critical of those who switch. ... i don't think that one's experience switching is always automatically helpful for slave education when a person who is a switch

is in His "Master head."

To begin with, good teaching skills do not automatically come with being a Dominant or Master, switch, slave, or anything else for that matter. ... for those who switch, the information about and experience with submission may be insufficient in either quantity or quality to be of much use at all." (p. 39)

I am sure that this sentiment accurately reflects the author's experience in pursuing serious Master/slave relationships, though he acknowledges that there are a few Masters who are a bit more perceptive about the inner workings of a slave being. A writer cannot be faulted for passing on what he has learned first-hand. But it completely negates the pleasure I take in leading someone into submission and property status. The joy of mastery for me is all about being right inside that person's head, to anticipate their resistance, and know when to apply comfort or force. This is such delicious stuff, I am chagrined to hear that other Masters apparently do not relish it as much as I do.

I don't wish to be disrespectful of other people's play styles, but I can't help the image that springs to mind of a not-very-clever Master who wants a fast-food, ready-made slave-to-go, and is blind and dumb to the delight to be had in savoring the slave's development, hesitation, fear, arousal, and acquiescence. None of us can vicariously experience precisely the same gestalt as another, but when I am seducing or training a slave, I strive to come as close as possible. Without training, how can a slave be crafted precisely to my taste and my whimsy? Ethically, I feel that I have no right to ask a slave to do something if I am not fully aware of the consequences that following that order will have for them. I do everything I can to heighten my empathy with and understanding of what the slave experiences emotionally as well as physically. Without this, I'd feel alienated from them. And I think this sort of alienation could be quite dangerous to the slave's well being. Insofar as it led me to take a slave for granted

or feel complacent around him or her, it would also increase my risk of being unpleasantly surprised by rebellion or withdrawal on the part of my property.

I've already talked about the value of internalized Master and slave archetypes for their respective counterparts in the scene. I will go further and say that I believe the Master needs more than a dominant ideal or role model to guide him in developing his craft. I believe it is essential for an intuitive Master to have an internalized archetype of the slave, just as the anima is essential to the well-balanced male psyche, and the animus protects and nurtures women. This Slave Consultant is the source of my compassion, the compass that guides my [apparent] cruelty, the pressure that drives me into my possession and allows me to savor their surrender. It is the bridge between us, and when a slave has displeased me, it is that internalized notion of ultimate servitude that intercedes for them and mediates on their behalf. In what seems like a contradiction to me, Baldwin also says:

"It is my view that unless real intimacy develops in Master/slave connections, truly deep submission becomes impossible for the slave, and deeper Mastery also eludes the Dominant." (p. 91)

And also:

"i cannot be owned if i cannot be seen, because the Master cannot exercise ownership of what He doesn't know about". (p. 95)

I train my slaves because I enjoy their company, their conversation, their peccadilloes, their histories, their hopes and dreams. I train them to build our friendship, to strengthen their fealty, to teach them to trust me, and to teach them to fear my scorn. Training builds stamina, keeps them limber. It is also my way of allowing them to learn about me, to see the individual traits that make me who and what I am. I want a slave to be able

to read my body language and divine the difference between a frown that means I have not been obeyed quickly enough and a frown that means I am having a bad day and am in a lot of pain. How else are they to anticipate my wishes, and dance with me in the web of mutual understanding that looks to outsiders like magic or mind-reading?

Whenever a dominant/submissive relationship of mine falters, I turn to the framework of training to reestablish a connection, resolve conflicts, and get a fresh start. It is wise for a Master who wants to begin the process of recalibration to ask himself: Who was I a year ago? Who am I now? Who am I becoming? Who and what do I want my slave to become? What are the behaviors that demonstrate perfection in slavery to me? If my slave could learn to do one new thing in the next six months, what would I like that to be? In what way does this slave please me well? What criticism do I have of this slave's performance? What resources can I offer the slave to improve that conduct? What resources exist outside of this relationship that the slave should access to upgrade their service to me?

It can also be useful to delineate various levels of slavery, and be quite clear when the slave is expected to function at which level. Attitude, forms of address, responsibility, level of autonomy, mode of dress, and other details should be as specific as possible, to make sure the slave understands the difference between various levels. Each Master or Mistress will no doubt want to design an individual scale, but I can suggest the following categories, from the lightest level of submission on up: friend, employee, offspring, light, medium, heavy, complete.

The first three items on this list are idiosyncratic, and probably require some explanation. The "friend" category can be accessed when the Master wishes the slave to pretend that there is more of a peer-based relationship. This state can be enjoyable if the Master wants to attend a sporting event, art exhibit, or some other gathering and wishes the slave to respond according to his

or her own loyalties or tastes, and communicate this response honestly to the Master. The "employee" category can be necessary if the slave has an outside job. It can be jarring for the slave to move out of the Master's purview and into a context where they are expected to meet another boss's expectations. Most slaves very much appreciate some guidance about how to manage this transition and maintain a sense of still belonging to you while they earn a living. The "offspring" category is for Daddy/boy or related scenes, and allows the slave to regress a bit and perhaps express their more playful side. It is a warm and nurturing space in which the slave can relish his or her dependence, and is especially useful for re-parenting or repairing deficits in the slave's upbringing.

I leave the definitions of "light," "medium," "heavy," and "complete" servitude up to you. Only I cannot help but say, in what will perhaps seem a non sequitur, that the spectacle of one who has offered themselves up, not thinking about the consequences, trusting me to uphold and protect them, is awe-inspiring. So often it seems to me that the loving generosity of genuine submissives is thrown on barren ground, pearls before swine. It is like that legend, older than Jehovah, of the burning tree which is not consumed.

Perhaps if we Masters understood our slaves to be channels of divine or holy forces, we would approach them with more humility, with cleaner hearts and hands. I do not know of anything that I can do for another person which merits the slave's gifts, their obeisance, ministrations, loyalty, and blood. By such gifts are Masters made wealthy, like a shower of gold from the heavens. If you pray, pray to avoid presumption, and pray to become a worthy steward of the wealth you do not deserve.

Many of the barriers to perfect servitude which Baldwin mentions in Chapter 9 are based on the sexual taboos of the

monotheistic religions that dominate the current spiritual landscape. It seems worthwhile to mention, if only in passing, that cultivating a spirituality which validates your S/M sexuality is one way to draw the sting from these Judeo-Christian scorpions.

Aftercare

The BDSM community has a pretty firm and universal rule about aftercare following a scene, whether it's a one-night stand or part of an ongoing relationship. It's usually seen as very bad form to engage with a bottom, take them to an intense place where they are very vulnerable, then end the scene abruptly. A seasoned top pays as much attention to the transition time or gray zone before and after the scene as he or she does to where the cat-o'-nine-tails is landing, the placement of panic snaps in standing bondage, or which way the bevel of the piercing needle is facing. Top and bottom are supposed to speak the day after play. This check-in is to make sure that both parties are still feeling good about what happened. Just in case they don't, it creates a formal structure for the players to express any problems they might have had with the scene or unforeseen consequences that came up afterward.

Just as negotiating a Master/slave relationship is a more serious matter than setting up a single scene, the aftercare required of a Master or Mistress who is allowing a slave's contract to expire (or actively sending a slave away) is rather more extensive than bringing someone you've caned at a party a glass of water and chatting while they put their street clothes back on. Breaking up with a slave is not like divorcing a peer. As O'Rion Xcalibur has said, "You are morally obligated to care for the thing that you have tamed."⁵

Sometimes a parting of the ways between Owner and property can be so volcanic that it is not possible for either party

to do a good job of taking care of the other during this difficult transition. Ideally, I feel that an Owner must assess the slave's ability to care for themselves before sending them away. If your slave is capable of autonomous action, you can release them in a fairly efficient manner.

A very dependent slave needs more assistance, though they will not always accept it. In the most extreme case, you either need to find the slave an appropriate situation with another Master or supervise them gradually resuming the responsibility of managing their own life. This is a complete and total pain in the ass when you are weary of the slave and have decided that the two of you are not compatible. It's a good opportunity to mull over some questions about why you decided to take in somebody who was not more of a grownup, or (let's be honest, because this does happen) took an adult submissive down so many pegs that he or she became incompetent.

There are also, of course, manipulative submissives who aspire to slavery precisely because they wish to abdicate as many adult responsibilities as possible. I strongly caution you to screen out and reject these postulants. If you see a slave beginning to fall into this behavior pattern, you would be well advised to interrupt it earlier rather than later, and take whatever steps are necessary to liberate this person (and yourself) from the tyranny of their immaturity. Be prepared to witness a high level of rage. This behavior is frequently the result of deep emotional wounds. A bottom who is denied a much-longed-for opportunity to permanently regress will become your enemy for life. This is no exaggeration. Choose your slaves wisely.

Sometimes a slave will lose their Owner through no fault of their own. The Owner may realize that they are not actually up to the challenge of having erotic human property. (Or, more likely, a would-be owner will blame the hapless and well-intentioned slave for their own dereliction of duty, and oust the slave because

they cannot face the reproachful evidence of their own self-deception and failure.) Sometimes, unfortunately, life is cruel, and Masters or Mistresses leave this world and their slaves behind. Few therapists (indeed, few sadomasochists who do not engage in Master/slave relationships) can understand the intense grief, loneliness, and terror of the abandoned slave.

In such adverse circumstances, I would strongly urge the slave who is alone to take Baldwin's advice to heart.

"For a slave who is not owned, the prime directive is: PROTECT THE PROPERTY." (p. 87)

In other words, the slave must protect himself.

If necessary, this motto should be cross-stitched and hung in a little frame above the widowed bottom's bed or workplace. This difficult time of mourning will be much easier if you have dedicated yourself as much to the ideal of service as you have to any individual dominant human being. Find something, any sort of higher cause, to occupy at least some of your spare time. Be determined to create the sort of life for yourself that would make your Master or Mistress proud. Do nothing to dishonor his or her memory. By taking care of yourself, you show that you continue to love and obey the person who found you worthy to possess.

Indeed, the suggestion that you do nothing to dishonor the memory of a former Owner makes sense whether you lost that person because of death or disagreement. I am always impressed by a submissive who refuses to gossip about a dominant once their affiliation has ended. It takes considerable strength of character to do so when you feel that you were wronged. But it also sends a message to potential new partners that you respect your Owner's confidentiality and do not spread his or her dirty laundry out for the vulgar public's entertainment.

Bereaved or recently-separated Masters could take the same advice. It's hard to bite your tongue when your heart is broken or your pride is smarting. But the fact that your former slave ran up a large long-distance phone bill or drank all day or gave you herpes is nobody else's business. If you had a bad experience with a slave, whose fault was that, exactly? Were you the top (ostensibly in control) or not? A Master who complains bitterly about the rotten deal he's gotten from former slaves is advertising either: (a) his lack of perceptiveness about others' characters, (b) his impossibly high standards, or (c) his failure to provide adequate correction and discipline.

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If you've gotten this far, it will be apparent to you that the author and I have some very strong opinions about slavery and ownership as freely-chosen erotic vocations. (You've also demonstrated a level of patience with print that is rare in the age of the Internet.) It's been a real challenge to capture the multitude of reactions I had to SlaveCraft and to my own experiences with the concepts that Baldwin examines in such piquant and unsparing detail. As authoritative as either of us may seem, I want to conclude by reminding myself as much as the reader that there is no way to imagine all the permutations of a Master/slave relationship or any other form of BDSM. Fantasies, and the bodies that they drive, are delicately shaded with unique qualities that vary from one person to another. And the gestalt between the individuals who bring all that they are to a contract of ownership cannot be anticipated or regulated by anyone other than the parties who are directly involved.

What SlaveCraft has done is take the concept of and discussion about BDSM play to a whole new level. Before Baldwin's book, almost all of the discourse about play between tops and bottoms of all sorts focused on individual acts and the

choreography of a single session. While this may be the only way to simplify D/s enough to teach the novice the basics of technique and communication, it leaves that same novice unprepared to deal with the explosion of sensation and emotion that results when a series of scenes are strung together like sharp-edged precious gems or the single links of a chain into a collar. A collar, furthermore, that may not come off just because everyone has left the dungeon. The paradigms Baldwin presents in *SlaveCraft* allow us to pull back and obtain a wider view of what we are about; to see the context created by individual scenes woven together into a shared life.

Crafting a successful scene is an enormous spiritual, creative, and sexual endeavor. Embarking upon a relationship that is governed by each individual's need to wield or yield power is yet more difficult-and rewarding. To say to another, "I am owned.", or "You are mine."... well, some people would think it was crazy to invest that much time and energy in another mortal being. I believe it is a risk taken with great love and passion, as valid as the impermanent, artful and strong, conscious movements of a dancer or an athlete. We do what we can to bring meaning into our lives before we die. Trapped inside skins and skulls that guard the loneliness of our selfhood, we are driven to seek out companionship, empathy with and knowledge of another, kinship, the reassurance of being utterly seen and known. The brief moments when we think we may have succeeded are more valuable than any material victory or profit. The person who does not take up this quest is perhaps not fully human, or completely alive, even though it requires the seeker to pass through the fiery ordeal of self-examination and the terror of being condemned to live forever outside of others' notions of love, sanity, or health.

As I hope this book has demonstrated, you are not alone. Others who feel drawn to the same vocation to possess or become property can tell their own stories, but they cannot enter into the world of your exact and peculiar need and prescribe each step of

this path for you. Still, we gather together to exchange these stories, because we wish one another well, because to us "civilization" is a wilderness, and we are savages in need of shelter, fire, food, a shared language, a tribe.

May you find what you are looking for, and may it be a doorway into your soul, and the soul of the adored one that I believe each one of us is fated to meet.

Endnotes

1 This comment appears with david stein's permission, which was granted providing the following amendment was included. He is now slave-identified, uses lower case for his name, and is under the Guardianship of Master Steve Sampson. In a May 30, 2000 telephone conversation, he explained to me that he had posted this message during a period when he was discouraged about his own ability to succeed as a slave and had yet to meet or correspond with any significant number of men who were happy in this role, or as Masters, for an extended time. Based on his own more recent experiences and greater knowledge of what others have done and are doing (see his Web pages at www.lthredge.com/ds), he now feels that though Master/slave relationships are very difficult to sustain, it can be done if the partners are sufficiently determined and willing to work at it together. I'd like to clarify that stein's old gl-asb post is mentioned here not to question the validity or worth of Master/slave relationships, but as a jumping-off place to talk about what an intense desire it can be.

2 I include this option because it seems to be a popular one. However, I continue to feel that S/M is no substitute for therapy. Any good sexual experience or meaningful relationship can cer-

tainly generate healing and transformation. But if you are experiencing depression, addiction, trauma, sexual dysfunction, or other things that threaten your quality of life, consult a trained, nonjudgmental mental health professional who can provide ongoing care specifically tailored to your needs.

3 This is, of course, also known as Top's Disease, a term I coined in the late '70s to describe certain people who shall remain nameless, but were prone to expecting everyone to address them as "Goddess This" or "Master That" and never ever fetched their own drinks, hung up their own coats, or asked permission before touching other people's property. One such person refused to join a local leather club because it allowed bottoms to run for office, and he believed this was the height of bad judgment, since everyone knows bottoms can't be trusted to hold that much responsibility. (He himself had never, to my knowledge, volunteered one hour of work to a leather organization.) Another believed that any bottom who asked for a safe word was a SAM (smart-assed masochist) who should be ostracized. Unfortunately, I can't tell any of my really juicy stories about Top's Disease, because the players would be instantly recognizable to anyone who's attended International Mr. Leather, International Ms. Leather, or Living in Leather. There are ultra scary forms of Sash Rash that go right down to the bone.

4 This concept comes from Frank Land's article "Recalibration of a Slave," which appeared in *Dungeonmaster* No. 23, January 1984. Thanks to Joseph Bean at the Leather Archive and Museum for researching this source so it could be cited here.

5 This epigram appears with the permission of O'Rion Xcalibur, who wanted me to note that it was inspired by a similar quote in *The Little Prince*.

About the Authors

a grateful slave

As of Fall 2001, he was un-owned and living in California.

Guy Baldwin, M.S.

A licensed psychotherapist, Baldwin has maintained a private practice for 18 years, focused primarily on clients engaged in various forms of radical sexuality. His print interviews and radio/television appearances are simply too numerous to list.

He is perhaps best known for his many probing essays, and for one of his previous books, *Ties That Bind*. It is a collection of his *Drummer Magazine* columns on a wide range of topics related to the Leathersex experience. Other work has appeared in *International Leatherman*, *Frontiers*, *The Leather Journal*, *The Sandmutopia Guardian*, and in the anthologies: *Leatherfolk*, *Ritual Sex*, *Happily Ever After*, and *Horsemen*. A searching interview with him is one of the 16 published in Mark Thompson's *Gay Soul* (Harper, San Francisco 1994).

In 1989, Mister Baldwin was chosen to serve as the eleventh International Mister Leather and the second Mister National Leather Association. He is the only person to have held both positions concurrently. He has received both the Pantheon and Dominion Lifetime Achievement Awards, and in 2000, Baldwin was named "Centurion" by the Leather Archive and Museum....his most prized accolade.

Joseph W. Bean

Joseph W. Bean was, until January 1st, 2002, the Executive Director of the Leather Archives & Museum. Before moving to Chicago to help develop the LA&M in 1997, he was the Managing Editor, first at Desmodus, publisher of *Drummer*, and then later at Brush Creek Media where he oversaw the publication of numerous erotic lifestyle periodicals, including *International Leatherman*.

He is also the author of *Leathersex: A Guide for the Curious Outsider and the Serious Player*, *Leathersex Q & A*, and most recently, *Flogging*. He has also edited books by Guy Baldwin, Mistress Nan, Jack Rinella and other well known thinkers and policy-makers of the leather world. He compiled and edited *Horsemen*, a collection of his favorite erotic short stories. His work and ideas also appear in *Leatherfolk*, edited by Mark Thompson; Michael Ford's *Happily Ever After*; *Different Loving* by Brame, Brame and Jacobs; Brenda Love's *Encyclopedia of Unusual Sexual Practices*; and other collections and anthologies.

His many efforts have been recognized with community awards too numerous to list here, but include Lifetime Achievement Awards, the designation of July 12, 1997 as Joseph W. Bean Day in San Francisco, and the Founders Award from the 15 Association in San Francisco. He cherishes that one the most because it is an honor originated among men who know him as a leatherman and not just, as he styles it, as a "leather celebutante."

Patrick Califia, M.A.

Patrick Califia is a long-time Second Wave leather community activist and author. He lives in San Francisco where he is in private practice as a licensed marriage and family therapist. Patrick struggles with an autoimmune disability that limits his mobility. His most recent fictional work includes *No Mercy*, a collection of short erotic fiction, and *Sex Changes: The Politics of Transgenderism*. *Sensuous Magic* is his contribution to the long list of S/M 101 "how to" books. He is currently working on *The Code*, a novel about an S/M relationship between an Old Guard leatherman and an FTM, and *Speaking Sex to Power*, a collection of essays.

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"The book is unique, and brilliantly so, shedding new clarity upon the area of human sexuality considered murky or misguided by most... SlaveCraft delivers the unexpected impact of a spiritual treatise, so while there is much discussion of specific attitudes and behaviors, the sum of its contents presents depthfulness beyond the details. One need not be a devotee or even particularly interested in the lifestyle of erotic servitude to be profoundly engaged by these writings."

-Mark Thompson
editor *Leatherfolk*

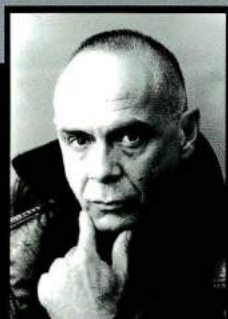


photo by: Cliff Brown

Guy Baldwin is a well-known psychotherapist whose clients include many men and women who engage in SM/leather/fetish/erotic play. He is a nationally sought after speaker and respected writer on the these subjects. He lives in Los Angeles.



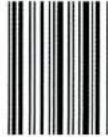
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